Southeast Asia Program

at Cornell University

SPRING BULLETIN 2018

Cornell University

ABOUT THE COVER

Jompet Kuswidananto

Jompet Kuswidananto

Java's Machine: Crevasses, 2014

photo courtesy of the artist

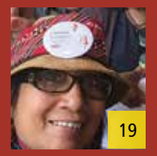
Jompet studied Communications at Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Originally trained as a musician, Jompet turned to the visual arts and went on to work within the local Yogyakata art community. In 1998 and continuing to the present day, he has been a part of 'Teater Garasi,' a multidisciplinary collective of artists.

Jompet's art crosses a diverse range of mediums, including installation, video, sound, performance, and theater. His works explore Indonesia's history and the complexities of contemporary life in a globalized world. His practice focuses on issues of politics, colonialism, power, and mass mobilization in the context of post-reformation Indonesia. In 2014, Jompet garnered a major award for emerging Asian artists, the Prudential Eye Award, for his installation work.

Jompet has taken part in significant national and international exhibitions, including the Yokohama Triennale, Japan, 2008; *Beyond the Dutch,* Centraal Museum Utrecht, The Netherlands, 2009; the Tenth Lyon Biennale, France, 2009; *Indonesian—Eye,* Saatchi Gallery, London, 2011; *Phantoms of Asia,* Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, 2012; Taboo, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney, 2012; RALLY: Contemporary Indonesian Art—*Jompet Kuswidananto and Eko Nugroho,* National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia, 2012; Taipei Biennial, Taiwan, 2012; Asian Anarchy Alliance, Tokyo Wonder Site, 2012; Asian Art Biennial, Taipei, 2015; and *Order and After,* Sonica Festival, Glasgow, Scotland, 2015.

Solo shows include Java's Machine: Phantasmagoria, Osage Gallery, Singapore and Hong Kong, 2009 and 2010; *Third Realm,* site-specific project for the Gervasuti Foundation, 54th Venice Biennale, 2011; On Asphalt, Nanzuka Underground, Tokyo, and Project Fulfill Art Space, Taipei, 2012; and *Grand Parade,* Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, 2014; After Voices, Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Sydney, 2016; *On Paradise,* Museum of Contemporary Arts (MAC's) Grand-Hornu, Belgium, 2017.

INSIDE



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Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Spring is here, this capricious season between snow and rain, winter and summer. Worms emerge, birds chirp, yet the ice still hangs on houses and clings to the shale of gorge walls. Though Ithaca spring often feels like winter, if you look closely at the ground in March, you can begin to see the tendrils of baby plants unfurling through the hard winter soil, breaking the border between earth and air. Nature cracks open to grow, and in this uncontained way, the seasons crisscross.

Like nature, SEAP travels across boundaries, making countless exchanges, collecting and collaborating along the way. The breadth and depth of scholarship by SEAP faculty, students, and visiting fellows never ceases to impress me, and in every issue of the SEAP *Bulletin* I have the pleasure of displaying it. Perhaps what I love most about this issue in particular is the sense of expansive inquiry in every story. From Andrew Willford's comparative look at the cultural construction of power and potency within the spiritual and political realms across South and Southeast Asia (see "The Spectrum of Comparisons" on page 12) to Niti Pawakapan's exploration of the globalized economy of a Thai border town (see "Far Away but Never Isolated" on page 4), the sense of cultural flow reverberates across national borders.

SEAP events and exhibits, past and present, also hit these notes of comparison and crossing spatial and conceptual boundaries, from Elizabeth Wijaya's account of the highly interdisciplinary cross-Asia conference last fall (see "Encountering Ghosts at The Haunted Conference" on page 7) coupled with Kroch Library's exhibit exploring witchcraft and "magic" across Asia (see "Enchanted Asia" on page 26) to the upcoming conference on "Kings and Dictators: The Legacy of Monarchy and the New Authoritarianism in Asia." This two-day symposium in April is organized by SEAP in close collaboration with the East Asia Program, South Asia Program, and the Comparative Muslim Societies Program (see "Upcoming Events" on page 34).

Boundaries crossed in this issue are not only thematic and geographic, but also programmatic and institutional. In outreach, the Afterschool Language and Culture Program has renewed vitality with offerings of South and Southeast Asian languages for young children in local schools (see "Learning Language through Culture" on page 28). The "Global Voices in Education" speaker series, initiated by the South Asia Program with strong cosponsorship from SEAP, engaged undergraduates, particularly those in the education minor, to think globally (see "On Campus and Beyond" on page 30).

In my double role as managing editor for the *Bulletin* and SEAP's outreach coordinator, I am thrilled to announce the collaboratively planned and sponsored March 10 internationalization conference "Going Global: Leveraging Resources for International Education," held on the Tompkins Cortland Community College campus (see "Upcoming Events" on page 34). The event showcases SEAP's strong partnerships with community colleges and schools of education as well as our steadfast commitment to serving as a resource for strengthening global learning in higher education settings. This final outreach conference of the 2014-2018 National Resource Center grant cycle features presentations by both national and international organizations (Community Colleges for International Development and Asia Society, specifically) with the hope of broadening the impact of our efforts to support curricular internationalization.

Finally, let me call your attention to a special spread of articles about studying and teaching Southeast Asian languages. SEAP Director and Professor of Linguistics Abby Cohn writes eloquently on the diverse array of Southeast Asian languages offered here at Cornell and the critical role our university plays in elevating the quality of instruction and maintaining the availability of these language courses on a national scale (see "Cornell's Critical Role in Instruction of Southeast Asian Languages" on page 19 as well as the photo collage of last fall's Conference on Southeast Asian Language Teaching: New Directions on page 21). Also hear from each of SEAP's expert language instructors on what it's like to study a Southeast Asian language at Cornell (page 22). It's truly inspiring to witness all the collaborations and unbounded thought emerging from SEAP's community this spring.

Warmly,
Brenna Fitzgerald
Managing Editor, SEAP Bulletin
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far away but never isolated

by Niti Pawakapan,
SEAP visiting fellow

The first time I arrived in Khun Yuam, a small market town located some thirty kilometers from the Thailand-Myanmar border, was in the early 1990s.

I spent the next sixteen months conducting research on local traders and their trading enterprises, which, I discovered later, were complexly related to other activities in the community. The town's main road, Highway 108, which had recently been upgraded, collapsed several times during the rainy season; as a result, the Bangkok-Mae Hong Son bus service was canceled a few times. Travel by car was rather unpredictable. There were four public telephone booths where local and long-distant calls could be made. These phones were the only means I used to communicate with the outside world, though some phone booths were often out of order. For the first couple of months I felt that the town seemed so far away from everywhere and everything. Then I began to realize that there was a lot going on.

Sales representatives, mostly from Bangkok, entered the town in their company's trucks, loaded with all kinds of manufactured products. Some of them arrived every ten days and some every two weeks. The goods were not the only things they brought with them. They also introduced a new system, the hire purchase, to the locals, who wanted to buy their company's products, ranging from small electrical appliances to motorcycles, but did not have enough cash on hand to pay for them. They also brought Central Thai, the language they used to communicate with the locals who had their own languages. They preferred their Central food, so some local eating houses learned to cook and serve the new cuisine. Every now and then, caravans of itinerary traders came in their pickup trucks. Some of them offered similar goods as those of the sales representatives, but there were also different items such as fresh fruits that were not grown locally, various kinds of sweets, or even household furniture. Seafood, mainly fish, shrimp, and pawns from the country's eastern coast, was kept fresh in big ice containers in the back of pickup trucks. Some traders even provided outdoor cinema, free of charge, to entertain their

Left: Hmong women selling their produces from the hills.

Below: Cockles for sale, kept fresh in a ten-wheel refrigerated truck.

Motorcycles are the most popular vehicles.

local customers. There were Thai and foreign films; the latter were, of course, dubbed in Central Thai.

I returned to Khun Yuam for a short visit in 1997, when the Asian financial crisis (known in Thailand as the Tom Yum Goong crisis) took place. I wanted to see how the town and its residents were affected by the crisis. I also planned to visit some locals, who had become my friends. It seemed that the impact of the crisis, if any, was minimal. But there were changes. New houses and shops were under construction. Some young people who had been living in Bangkok and were now unemployed returned home. I soon realized why the land was so important to the locals. It did not merely produce food; it also symbolized family and "home," a place in which one could always take refuge. The crisis confirmed that Khun Yuam was a safe and comfortable refuge for young returnees.

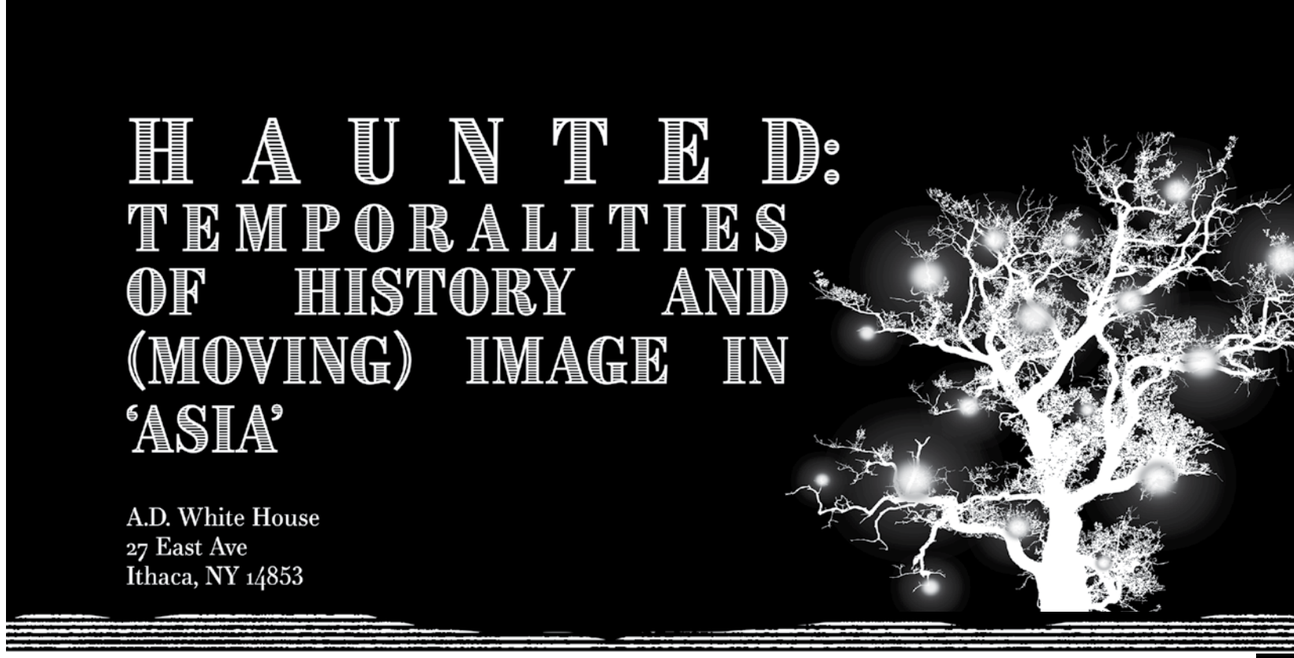
In 1999 Khun Yuam town became a municipality. It was the first time the town had its own mayor, who was elected by local people. The town had long been under the authority of the district head, a government official appointed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Bangkok. The election was a new experience for the locals, but they soon learned to live with it and enjoyed it. Now, they could make their own decision.

I visited the town three more times in 2010, 2016, and 2017. During the last visit many residents complained to me about the effects of the country's economic slowdown, but it was a different story at the weekly markets, which were organized by the municipal office and the district office. Traders came from all over the place. There were ten-wheel refrigerated trucks, transporting sea and freshwater fish, shrimp, pawns, cockles, and frogs to the markets. Various kinds of fresh fruit were offered. Baked goods were not only popular among the children, but also the locals of all ages; it reminded me of the English idiom "sell like hot cakes." Traders from Mae Hong Son arrived with their sushi, a cuisine no longer foreign to the locals. There were plenty of different foods, cooked and raw, as well as drinks for the customers. Manufactured products; electrical appliances; ready-made clothes, hats, shoes, and sandals; household and small miscellaneous items, either made in Thailand or the People's Republic of China, could be found at the markets.

Goods from Myanmar—for example, traditional Shan and herbal medicines; various kinds of nuts, cooking oil, and other ingredients; white candles; Burmese cigars; etc. were transported across the border for local consumption. The weekly market days not only served the town residents, but also the Hmong and Karen who lived in the villages on the hills, near and far. While many Hmong and Karen came down to buy goods, some Hmong women brought the vegetables grown in their hill farms to sell.

For many Thais, Khun Yuam may seem like a small place so far away. In reality, however, its location is crucial. It was a trading town between northern Thailand and Burma's Shan States in the nineteenth century. For a long time it has been a market town that serves the hill villages surrounding the town. After the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015, the government officials of Thailand and Myanmar and local business people have tried to improve the road networks between the border and Khun Yuam town and establish permanent border checkpoints in hopes of boosting trade, business, and tourism developments for both countries. As a matter of fact, some local business persons have for many years tried to promote the town as a border trading hub. The former town mayor, for example, even speculated about building a new highway to Thandwe, a western seashore town in Myanmar, visualizing Khun Yuam as the gateway between Thailand's northern region and Myanmar's west coast sea paradise. From my point of view as an anthropologist, Khun Yuam, despite its small size, has never been insignificant or isolated. Not surprising, perhaps, owing to the economic deterioration in the last few years, a border town with the trading prosperity like Khun Yuam offers hope for the country's economic recovery.

Niti Pawakapan was a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at SEAP in Fall 2017. He teaches at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University in Thailand. He completed his PhD in anthropology at the Australian National University. Before accepting his position at Chulalongkorn, he worked in New Zealand and taught at Yale University and the National University of Singapore. He has published four books in the Thai language and a number of articles, both in Thai and English. His research interests include borderlands studies, local trade and politics, migration, ethnicity and state-ethnic relations, and emotions. He has recently started new research on material culture.



Encountering GHOSTS
at the Haunted Conference

by Elizabeth Wijaya, PhD candidate in comparative literature

After an invigorating "haunted breath" morning yoga session led by Lenessa Shantaya, day one of the Haunted: Temporalities of History and (Moving) Image in 'Asia' conference started at 4:30 p.m., on November 3, 2017, with an introduction of Tani Barlow, the T. T. and W.F. Chao Professor of History at Rice University, given by Arnika Fuhrmann, professor of Southeast Asian studies at Cornell.[1] Embracing the conference's theme of "haunting," Barlow gave the keynote address, "Ghosts in the Mirrors: Advertising the Real Woman in Chinese Commercial Ephemera." Reading images of commercial print advertising from the 1920s, where the female figure admires herself in the mirror while smiling at her "magic commodities," Barlow opened this rich provocation:

> "Ghosts in the Mirrors" refers to a double bind of narcissistic play where mirrors reflect an actively caught self *as if it were already given*. My argument is that catching one female self as if already given contributes to the event of women historically....The female figures catch themselves as given apparitions in imaginary mirrors, adorned and lubricated with branded products; ghostly consumers devised in 20th century media.

Barlow tied her work to her mother, whom she referred to as a "modern girl."[2] She gave a memorable anecdote of her mother who had taken along her Pond's skincare bottle when she became a refugee and would refill the bottle with a cheaper product. In the Q&A session, audience members, including Timothy Murray, professor of comparative literature and English at Cornell; postdoctoral fellow Chan Cheow-Thia; and Iftkhar Dadi, associate professor of history of art, discussed topics ranging from Teresa Brennan and studies of Freud and the Freudian influence in China to Ming-Qing illustrations.

Day two started with *Haunted I*, chaired by Amy Villarejo, professor of performing and media arts at Cornell. In this lineup of speakers, Zhen Zhang, associate professor of cinema studies at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, focused on the trajectory of the work of Chi-

Far Left: Poster for the Haunted Roads film series at Cornell Cinema.

Middle: (from left) Emiko Stock and Arnika Fuhrmann. Photo by Chairat Polmuk.

Left: Panelists and Chair for Haunted 1: (from left) Zhen Zhang, Jean Ma, Brett de Bary, and Amy Villarejo. Photo by Elizabeth Wijaya.

nese independent filmmaker, Yang Lina. Emerging as part of the 1990s new documentary movement in urban generation cinema in Mainland China, Lina's fictional, feature-length film debut *Longing for the Rain* (2013) shows an affluent female protagonist who is enthralled in a sexual relationship with a ghost, taken to be exorcised by a Taoist priest, and eventually admitted into a Buddhist temple. Zhang invoked film scholar Bliss Lim's work on the "immiscible temporalities," which suggests that there are experiences of plural time that are not homogeneous and do not mix together. Instead, digital editing and its nonlinear nature can emphasize the ghostly quality of time.[3]

Next, Brett de Bary, professor of Asian studies at Cornell, began her talk with an extended reference to Arnika Fuhrmann's *Ghostly Desires*.[4] De Bary sees within Fuhrmann's arguments—which break with secular modernity without considering Buddhism as an orthodoxy—two key interventions in the notions of negativity in queer theory and minoritarian politics that avoid loss and the political rhetoric of claiming rights where a "moment of untimeliness doesn't need to function as a moment of critical alterity." From this framework, through Korean video art and a haunting figure of a woman who emerges from a grave, de Bary questioned, within Asian politics and art to come, the forms of sociality and political solidarity intellectuals need today.

Following de Bary, Jean Ma, associate professor of art and art history at Stanford University, juxtaposed Apitchatpong Weerasethakul's films *Blissfully Yours* (2002) and *Cemetery of Splendor* (2015) and Christopher Nolan's *Inception* (2015) with references to theorists Jonathan Crary, Jacqueline Rose, Jean-Louis Baudry, placing emphasis on the scenes of sleep, rather than the enactment of dreams in cinema, that will allow us to relinquish "entrenched perception about how films should be watched." Ma's talk ended with an invitation to consider the "possibilities of sleeping spectatorship." What if the sleeping subject in cinema and the sleeping spectator could offer forms of resistance to dominant ideas of action and progress? In the *Haunted I* discussion, SEAP doctoral candidate Chairat Polmuk noted that the cemetery, graveyard, and burial sites appeared across all three presentations, which sparked a discussion of haunting as attachment to space, the dynamic tension between apparatus, the act of walking on the soil/earth, and spectral space as well as transregional idiom or frame.

Chaired by Iftikhar Dadi, *Haunted II* began with Ashley Thompson, the Hiram W. Woodward Chair in Southeast Asian Art at SOAS, University of London, talking on "Angkor after Angkor: Notes on Buddhist Acts of Remembrance," followed by Meheli Sen's examination of "Acts of Possession, Gender, Love, and Spectrality in Bengali Cinema." Sen, assistant professor in the Department of African, Middle Eastern, and South Asian Languages and Literatures at Rutgers University, noted the lack of ghost films in the Bengali language and the preponderance of socialist melodramas. She investigated the "sonic texture of the gothic" in Satyajit Ray's *Monihara* (1961) and Aparna Sen's *Goynar Baksho* (2013), where "the female ghost is often announced and introduced through the sound of her jewelry." Kong Rithdee, a documentary filmmaker, screenwriter, and longtime writer for the *Bangkok Post*, spoke on the limited representation of Islam in Thai cinema, calling Thai films "frozen in time, tormented by identity politics, and haunted by propaganda of national unity."

In the Q&A session, Anne Blackburn, professor of Asian Studies at Cornell, raised a question for Thompson on Angkor having become an even more popular pilgrimage site since its decline as the seat of power. Rithdee responded to questions on the portrayal of Buddhists and Muslims in Thai cinema, and Sens reflected on the tragic and comic form in Bengali cinema in relation to the two films she discussed in her presentation.

I chaired the concluding roundtable with discussants Amie Elizabeth Parry, professor in the English Department of National Central University in Taiwan; Tani Barlow; and Timothy Murray. Parry responded to the conference discussion on the multiple realities invoked in haunting. From the resonances in Jean Ma's talk on sleeping characters and the possibilities of queer relationality that foregrounds vulnerability and intimacy, Barlow speculated on forming a community of sleepers dreaming each other's dreams. Murray spoke on how reality can no longer be thought of as realistic. He also announced the 2018 Cornell Council for the Arts Biennial theme: "Duration: Passage, Persistence, Survival."[5]

Rithdee's earlier talk on the Muslim minority in Thailand and the ongoing insurgency in Thailand's deep South set the stage for the screening of Pimpaka Towira's *The Island Funeral* (2015) at Cornell Cinema. The conference and the *Haunted Roads* film series, beginning with *Pop Aye* (Kirsten Tan, Singapore, 2017) and *Solo Solitude* (Yosep Anggi Noen, Indonesia, 2016), concluded with a post-show discussion with screenwriter Rithdee, moderated by Fuhrmann and me. From Rithdee we learned how the difficulties and danger of the location shoot in Pattani, in the far south of Thailand, shaped the aesthetic choices of the film.

Details from the post-show discussion resonated with my students from the Contemporary Southeast Asian Independent Cinemas First-Year Writing seminar, some of whom wrote on the film for their final paper—ruminating on the strong female Muslim protagonist, the significance of the island as utopic non-place in the film, and the relationship between politics and film aesthetics. The film screenings and conference affirmed for me the importance of tracing trans-Asian connections across disciplinary boundaries, as well as thinking about the overlapping hauntings between time, history, our cultural work, and artifacts.

Attendees went back up the hill for a dinner catered by Tamarind, a SEAP-favorite Thai restaurant, where conversation continued into the night (before some of us went down the hill to the Kahin Center for a different kind of haunting at the SEAP Halloween party). It was a beautiful night in Ithaca, with the gathered luminaries and the interconnecting trans-Asian ghosts, spirits, and wondering souls.

The conference was jointly organized by the Southeast Asia Program, East Asia Program, South Asia Program, and Comparative Muslim Societies Program, with support from the Cornell Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies; Cornell Contemporary China Initiative; Society for the Humanities; University Lectures Committee; departments of Comparative Literature, Performing and Media Arts, and Asian Studies; in collaboration with the Central New York Humanities Corridor.

[1] This conference was coconvened by Arnika Fuhrmann, Iftikhar Dadi, and Elizabeth Wijaya, supported by SEAP Associate Director Thamora Fishel, SEAP student administrative assistant Divya Sriram, and administrative assistant James Nagy. The conference took place from November 3–4, 2017.
[2] See Alys Eve Weinbaum, ed., *The Modern Girl around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).
[3] Bliss Cua Lim, *Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).
[4] Arnika Fuhrmann, *Ghostly Desires: Queer Sexuality and Vernacular Buddhism in Contemporary Thai Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).
[5] See 2018 Biennial, *Cornell Council for the Arts*, cca.cornell.edu/?p=2018biennial.

Steps toward Gender Equality in the Indonesian Workforce:

The 2017 US–Indonesia Women's CEO Summit

by Audrey Tirtohadiguno, undergraduate in design and environmental analysis, class of 2020, and a member of the Cornell Indonesian Association

WHEN FINANCE MINISTER SRI MULYANI TOOK THE STAGE at the US–Indonesia Women's CEO Summit in Washington, DC, in October 2017, she was quick to engage the audience with her candid humor. Her speech, punctuated by compelling anecdotes and wise words, shed light on the responsibilities of both male and female counterparts in establishing gender equality in the workforce, as well as the particular challenges women face in achieving a balance between their personal and professional lives as more opportunities become available to them.

While Indonesia has achieved equal access for women in educational settings, it has not yet done so in the formal labor force, where women have only thirty-two percent participation. According to Minister Mulyani, women own greater than fifty percent of small and micro enterprises, demonstrating a desire to achieve and contribute; however, they own just seventeen percent of export companies and hold less than thirty-three percent of senior management positions in most firms. Amidst the gender disparity, these statistics show evidence of growing female participation in the workforce and a desire for social and economic upward mobility.

One recurrent theme in the conference was how women often face more pressures than men when striving to pursue a career because of the challenges they face when raising a family, a role that has traditionally been tasked to mothers. As a wife and mother of three children, Minister Mulyani spoke on this topic from experience. Listing her many accomplishments in a humorously matter-of-fact tone, including being the first female minister of planning and the first female coordinating minister in business in Indonesia, she was met with a round of applause from the audience.

So what are some steps toward gender equality in the workforce that both men and women can take? The minister emphasized the importance of one's family as a source of support, motivation, and joy and stressed that "balance *is* possible." While there are enormous responsibilities placed on women who are expected to manage home life, these responsibilities can and ought to be shared with men. Men can also express their support in other ways, such as by acknowledging their wives for their career achievements and supporting their goals. Pausing for a moment, the minister made sure to acknowledge her family's support by pointing out her husband in the audience. Incidentally, many other high-achieving women who spoke at the event noted their family as a motivating factor in their success.

But is pursuing a career with one's family at home easier said than done? Speaking with candid honesty, the finance minister addressed the deep sense of guilt women often feel when leaving their children at home for their jobs—guilt no doubt induced by a society that demands that women prioritize home life and put their careers second. Minister Mulyani believes this feeling of guilt resonates with all working mothers and cannot be ignored in one's conscience. As one possible solution, she suggests using guilt as a reason to consider one's time at work more valuable. Like a true economist she asserts,

Left: Female CEOs gather to discuss their views toward the role of women in Indonesia's economy, gender issues, women in leadership, and managing work/life balance. Right: Current Finance Minister of Indonesia Sri Mulyani shares her experiences as first female Minister of Planning and the first female Coordinating Minister in Business in Indonesia.

"Consider the lost time as higher opportunity costs. Treat your guilt in a constructive way. Use it as a fire in your belly to do better at work."

For many women, the persistent challenge in striving to achieve a work-life balance lies in the task of juggling multiple roles, for example, switching between the responsibilities of a wife, mother, and career-woman. According to Minister Mulyani, guidance can be found in a personal role model. The finance minister spoke compellingly of her mother as her role model who showed her that balancing a thriving personal life and career is indeed possible. While raising seven children, both her mother and father were university professors who demonstrated to her the benefits of balancing responsibilities between spouses and the sense of fulfillment and joy that can arise from devoting time for family as well as a successful career.

The minister further recommended gaining experiences that can develop personal character. Drawing on examples of her participation in sports while growing up, she spoke to younger members of the audience: "Invest in experiences outside of classes that shape your character and make friends with people who are different from you."

Setting aside time for personal life outside of school and work may seem obvious to some, but Arianna Huffington, cofounder and editor in chief of the *Huffington Post*, notes that burnout and excessive work is a common syndrome in today's generation. This is especially true for women who must work hard against stereotypes that they are less competent than men. In her international bestseller *Thrive,* Huffington writes that productivity is often considered a marker of success that sometimes comes at the sacrifice of one's well being, personal connectedness, and capacity for compassion and giving. Concurring with Minister Mulyani's insights, Huffington shares, "Our eulogies celebrate our lives very differently from the way society defines success. They are not about our resumes—they are about cherished memories, shared adventures, small kindnesses, and acts of generosity, lifelong passions, and the things that made us laugh."[1]

Finally, Minister Mulyani spoke about the element of caring for and empowering others. She asserted that caring for others, especially other women, can be used as a strength and advantage in professional careers. Her advice is that women should mentor and coach other women at every career level, reminding the audience: "Remember—It's not about you, it's about others." Senior female managers in particular have greater responsibility to empower younger colleagues who may not have supportive home or work environments or may lack educational training backgrounds. Recently, the importance of men assuming roles as advocates for women's equity in the workplace has also become increasingly apparent. By creating environments conducive to equal gender participation, organization leaders can initiate changes in workplace culture that encourage both male and female employees to contribute more optimally to their vocations.

Regarding the broader repercussions of gender equality, the minister notes that increased female participation in the workforce has the potential to benefit society at large. She says that "promoting women's participation in the labor force through meaningful policy changes is not only good in terms of equality, but it can really improve economic growth in terms of [helping the workplace become] more inclusive and sustainable." As women today gain more access to skills, training, and opportunities to join the workforce, businesses can expect to see greater productivity and holistic growth.

Speaking with the conviction of a leader with wisdom drawn from experience, Minister Mulyani's speech strikes at the key challenges and opportunities of achieving gender equality in Indonesia. Alongside many other business leaders at the conference, her insights illuminated the potential for professionals, at any stage of their respective careers, to promote inclusivity and gender equality in their workplaces. On a more personal level, she further reassured the audience that many domestic partners can successfully balance their family and career goals as more awareness around and paths toward equal gender participation emerge.

[1] Arianna Huffington, *Thrive: The Third Metric to Redefining Success and Creating a Life of Well-Being, Wisdom, and Wonder* (New York: Harmony, 2015).

by Andrew Willford,
professor of anthropology

The Spectrum of Comparisons

Comparative studies not only help test theories across the specificity of time and place, but also make visible what is unique to each context...

MY OWN RESEARCH in Southeast Asia has been in Malaysia but draws both comparisons with and transnational ties to South Asia. While deeply interested in probing theories of ethnicity, nationalism, and religious revivalism in the context of modern statecraft, I also discovered that the historical cultural currents across the Indian Ocean created a unique set of relationships between Tamil Hindus and Malays that were complicated by the fissures created by the modern and postcolonial rendering of ethnicity in Malaysia.[1]

The so-called "Indicized" past of ancient Malaya casts a large influence on Malay culture and, thus, the uncomfortable intimacies between Malay Muslims and Tamil Hindus. In noting these cultural binds, I am drawing upon an influential scholarship on Southeast Asia by scholars such as Benedict Anderson, Oliver Wolters, Clifford Geertz, George Coedès, Stanley Tambiah, James Siegel, Tony Day, John Pemberton, among many others, who constructed and/or critiqued a model of Southeast Asian polity and society premised on notions of sacred power derived, in part, from Hindu-Buddhist conceptions of spiritual potency and divine kingship.

In Southeast Asia, the idea that spiritual power is conjoined to political power in the form of the god-king, or "Devaraja," radiating outward in successive concentric circles of relative spiritual potency that, in turn, is mapped on to sociopolitical and geographic space, has been called the "galactic" or "mandala" model of polity. While clearly just an ideal-type, this analytic, ostensibly drawn from South Asian models of divine kingship, has influenced the study of ancient kingdoms such as Majapahit, Srivijaya, and Angkor, to name a few.[2]

Ethnographic and political studies of contemporary Southeast Asian social and political orders have subsequently drawn upon these models in looking at the cultural construction of power and potency within the spiritual and political realms. This "stratigraphic" approach has posited continuities between the ancient and modern, and even postcolonial, orders of statecraft. This has not only been applied to Hindu or Buddhist Southeast Asia, but also to localized Islamic polities, past and present.[3]

On the other hand, challenges to an Indic model for understanding Southeast Asian "galactic" or "mandala" polities have also been influential and important. Edmund Leach most famously challenged the cosmic polity model by examining how ethnic identity in upland Burma was flexible, depending upon context.[4] More recently, James Scott has offered a model for upland-lowland relationships in Southeast Asia that suggests upland communities have adopted strategies of state avoidance against the lowland rice-growing polities and their galactic ideologies of governance.[5]

Both Leach's classic study as well as Scott's recent opus have ignited a legacy of debate surrounding the ideological reach of both the "galactic" states, as well as theories of identity and hegemony, more broadly. On the latter point, the avowedly culturalist model of purity and impurity (or hierarchy) that lies at the heart of many constructions of divine polity and sacred power has been critiqued in powerful and exciting new ways through Scott's more instrumental analysis.[6] Indeed, these critiques of Dumont's model of South Asian hierarchy have long been voiced in South Asian studies.[7] Still, Dumont's influence can be felt in Southeast Asian studies, as powerfully demonstrated in Ward Keeler's new book, *The Traffic in Hierarchy: Masculinity and Its Others in Buddhist Burma*.[8]

While many studies have assessed the influence of "Indic" ideas in Southeast Asian culture and society, Scott's felicitous

Left: Kurumba painting of harvest festival offerings at sacred grove painted by R. Balasubramaniam, used with permission from The Keystone Foundation (note: photography of actual groves violates their sacrality).

Far Left: Within Kurumba hamlet.
Left: Senior Kurumba healer showing his millets to author.
Above: Local healer pointing to Kurumba hamlet.

book has inspired comparisons to other upland-lowland dynamics in different regions. Given the close historical ties between South and Southeast Asia, it seems useful to look at a comparable ecological and cultural context in South India to see what purchase Scott's key insights provide.

For the past five years I have been spending time in the Western Ghats of South India, particularly in the Nilgiris mountain range, investigating questions related to identity and mental health within a rapidly changing social context. The Nilgiris is a small but ecologically diverse area that has been declared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a biosphere reserve. From the hot plains near Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, the Nilgiris rises abruptly to elevations of over seven thousand feet. For this reason it was popular during British colonial times as a desired "hill station" respite from the heat of the plains.

The diversity of indigenous (*Adivasi*) communities living in the hills has been of great anthropological interest, each occupying specific territorial and occupational niches within the biosphere. The most famous of these are the Toda, but several other tribes reside in the region, including the Kota, Badaga, Irula, and Kurumba, all living within distinct ecological zones and practicing different forms of cultivation, foraging, and/or animal husbandry.

My own research has looked primarily at a sense of crisis that is ensuing within Kurumba and Irula communities due to outmigration for economic reasons, cultural assimilation into the more dominant Tamil-Hindu mainstream, and the near collapse of a complex ritual system that involves cultivation, ancestor veneration (and, hence, their protective shield over the community), a rise in sorcery accusations in the context of the market economy, and environmental challenges associated with agro-industries and urbanization. The simple question I ask here is whether the upland-lowland relationships within South Asia resemble the dynamics that Scott argues apply to upland Southeast Asia vis-à-vis the principles of hierarchy and spiritual power that govern lowland Hindu polities.

Answering this question requires a historical and dynamic perspective. The archeological anthropologist Gwendolyn Kelly has argued that a disdain existed among Nilgiris indigenous people toward the rice-cultivating civilizations of the plains.[9] Kelly also suggests that the relationships between upland and lowland populations were too complex to characterize them as simply fraught, with the former avoiding the influence of the latter. She demonstrates that linguistic, religious, and cultural influences flowed from the lowlands to the highlands over the centuries. Hindu ideas of sacred power, purity, pollution, and, more generally, hierarchy, for instance, did not constitute hierarchies *within* tribal society, though they may have had an impact on relative notions of hierarchy *between* communities, as argued by scholars such as William Noble and Paul Hockings.[10]

I point to a couple of observations I have noted in my research, preliminary though they might be, that might seem felicitous in light of South/Southeast Asian notions of sacred power and hierarchy. It is my hope that comparisons of this sort, at one time common in the studies of power and potency in Southeast Asia, remain of general interest to scholars. As noted above, the recent work by Kelly and Keeler, for instance, have reignited some of the debates surrounding hierarchy, hegemony, state avoidance, and spiritual power by thinking across the boundaries of the Indian Ocean.

My first observation concerns the relationship between identity, land, and health. In fieldwork I conducted with research collaborators at the Keystone Foundation and students within the Nilgiris Field Learning Center, we have found that a sense of crisis has emerged within the Kurumba and Irula communities as a result of changing modes of economic production and the sociocultural changes that have occurred as a result of these developments.[11, 12]

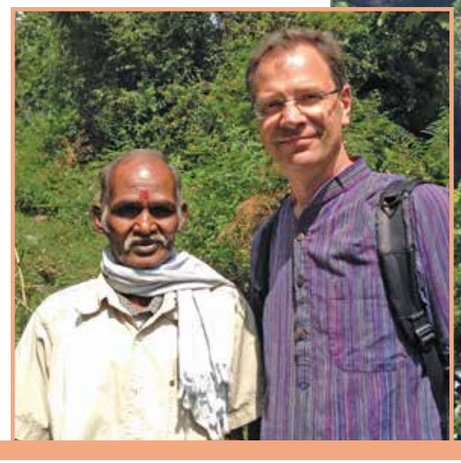
These communities were characterized by their small populations and relative egalitarian social structures. They generally lived on the lower and more forested slopes of the mountains, practicing a combination of horticulture, small-game hunting, and foraging. Of particular importance was the cultivation of millets, a staple in their traditional diets. These millets were grown on lands associated with their ancestors and near the sacred groves where they honored these ancestors, who, residing in a parallel sacred world, looked after the living by protecting them from dangerous malevolent forces and wildlife (tigers, elephants, leopards, bison, etc.).

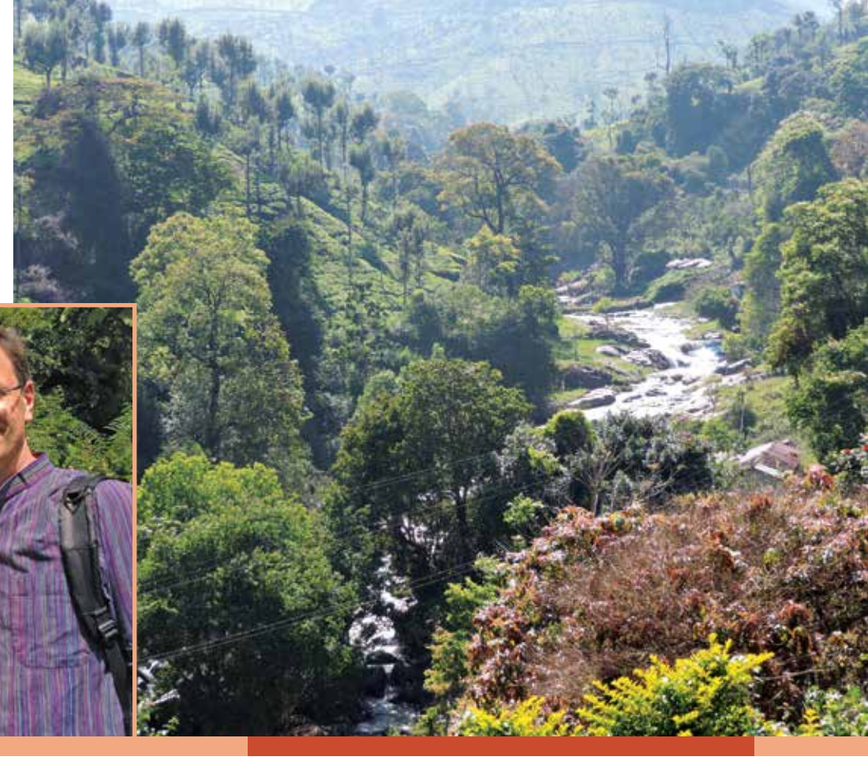
The honoring of ancestors was tied to a ritual calendar and, in particular, to a harvest festival in which the specific millets grown on sacred sites were offered to them. In recent times there has been a calamitous collapse of the complex system of rituals that provided cosmic protection to the living as well as the templates for social, economic, and cultural reproduction. This has come about due to the changing economic imperatives facing indigenous communities in the hills of the Nilgiris. Large tea estates have encroached upon ancestral lands in the past fifty years, and with this many sacred groves have been encompassed by commercial interests. The growth of industrial agriculture has also meant a shrinking forest habitat for many animals, creating wildlife corridors that are protected by the forestry department. Human-wildlife conflicts have increased, particularly affecting the forest-based communities such as the Kurumba and Irula. Many within these communities now are reluctant to cul-

Left: Wild bison, known as gaur.

Below: Senior Kurumba healer pictured within his hamlet with author, Andrew Willford.

Right: Tea cultivation in the midst of the forest.





tivate millets or other crops, given the risks of elephants and bison, in particular, to cultivators.

With an increasing reliance upon the cash economy, many indigenous community members have left their hamlets to work within the tea industry, construction, roadworks, and other wage-paying jobs. Forest-dwelling hamlet communities now face a critical labor shortage with regard to cultivation. Moreover, the cultural and ritual knowledge associated with the various sacred groves and seasonal festivals has been lost, leading to a catch-22 expressed by many villagers: On the one hand, locals say they suffer because they are failing to celebrate the necessary rituals that honor the ancestors and thus provide cosmic protection from malevolent forces. On the other hand, many also say that they fear conducting these ancestral rituals incorrectly, noting that any mistake in performance or utterance could be spiritually disastrous. Moreover, the necessary millet offerings for the ancestors are no longer available due to the abandonment of cultivation for the reasons mentioned above (one cannot use millets from the market, for instance, as a substitution for the locally grown and, thus, sacred grains).

My second observation is to note that as a result of these complicated changes, there is a growing anxiety among residents in the forest communities that malevolent powers have been unleashed on their communities. This has produced an anomie and sense of fear that manifests in culturally specific ways but ultimately points to the psychosocial stress associated with a loss of identity.

We have observed and recorded numerous instances of stress-induced mental health challenges experienced by community members. As mentioned above, with failed reciprocity to the ancestors, spiritual protection against dangerous forces (including wildlife) is missing. Moreover, with growing inequality, as is the case in many other societies turning from subsistence and a more generalized exchange to the cash economy, increased suspicions of sorcery add to an ethos of uncertainty and malevolence.

This is exacerbated within the Kurumba society because they have been the traditional healers and sorcerers in the hills, practicing their craft through the commission of other tribes in addition to serving their own internal ritual and medical systems. Thus, their belief that they have particular powers to harness, but now these same forces have been unharnessed or unleashed by the aforementioned collapse of the ritual system, means a generalized feeling that powerful yet uncontrolled forces lurk in the forests with increasing malevolence. Finally, not consuming said sacred millets within the local diet, which was increasingly becoming rice-based due to subsidies provided by the government, individuals claimed they were "weak" and more prone to illness. While there may be a nutritional component to this impression, my point is that the mind/body or psyche/soma relationship is mediated by culture.

While I obviously oversimplify a complex set of relationships between livelihoods, cultural life-worlds, and physical environments, the point I wish to make is that cultural notions of sacred power are linked to a symbiosis between not only the living and the dead, but also the specific sites of food production, land use, and ritual life. These are not unique to the highlands and have many overlapping features with, for example, Tamil cultural beliefs down in the plains.

Indeed, the idea of sacred space, tutelary deities, and sacred power are widely shared across South Asia. Health—physical, psychic, and spiritual—is tied to identity and place in ways that replicate, rather than disavow, the galactic polities of the plains-based societies. The spectrum of cultural flow from lowlands to highlands, and perhaps vice versa, has been occurring for millennia, so there is nothing particularly surprising about some of these continuities. The implication is that we are witnessing symptoms that are "thickly" tied to what might be called a strong belief system, which on the one hand persists despite changing socioeconomic conditions, and on the other hand is, through its very persistence, producing psychosocial and embodied symptoms of stress.

Caste hierarchy, with its "mandalalike" social and spatial arrangements, is not a feature within the societies mentioned above. Hence, it might be wise to separate issues of political avoidance and conflict as distinct from the "thin" view of culture and hegemony that Scott has advocated for "Zomia" societies in mainland Southeast Asia. It is perhaps a question of scale. Small-scale forager and horticulture-based societies tend to be more egalitarian in nature, but not necessarily more tactical and mobile with regard to the demands of polity, the ancestors, and most importantly, the social and physical landscape. That is, cultural life-worlds resonate deeply, I am discovering, despite rapid socioeconomic transformations.

Lastly, the history of intertribal relationships in the hills of the Western Ghats, and the Nilgiris in particular, is as equally complex and fraught as are the relationships between upland and lowland societies. What we seem to witness is a whole spectrum of possible comparisons with Southeast Asia that might prove to complicate the construction of sacred power. Not only are there numerous alternative and challenging theories of galactic politics in South Asia, set against the purity/impurity model of hierarchy posited influentially by Dumont and others, there are also ways to reinterpret the uncanny engine of hierarchy and its discontents in Southeast Asia, inspired in part by lowland-upland relations, but also exceeding them by focusing on internal diversity and critique within both the upland and lowland societies themselves.

Scott's felicitous comparison of the "mandala" model of spiritual polity to a "concertina" is a welcome start in this direction.[13] Like a concertina, the historical ebb and flow of religious and cultural ideas in South and Southeast Asia

It is the unique historical intimacy between regions and the flows of religious ideas across the Indian Ocean that continue to make comparisons between South and Southeast Asia so fascinating and productive.

Tea growing in the Nilgiris lower slopes, near Kurumba and Irula settlements.

provide a rich panoply or spectrum ripe for comparisons. These can take place between upland and lowland, but also between upland and upland, and lowland and lowland. It is the unique historical intimacy between regions and the flows of religious ideas across the Indian Ocean that continue to make comparisons between South and Southeast Asia so fascinating and productive, once we move beyond the ideal types (for example, mandala polity and state avoidance) for each region and explore complexity in all its historical, geographic, cultural, and ecological forms.

My work in the Nilgiris is part of a larger project investigating mental health and traditional medicine in India in the context of a global trend toward biomedicalization.[14] It is my hope to turn again to Southeast Asia, perhaps within an indigenous context in Malaysia or Indonesia, in order to draw further comparisons on health, healing, and the cultural shaping of illness. In my fascination with comparisons, particularly between South and Southeast Asia due to their proximity and historical and cultural intimacies, I will certainly have to reckon with the prototypical ideas associated with the likes of Scott and Dumont and their many critics, given the fecundity and continued relevance of their scholarship.

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1 See Andrew C. Willford, *Cage of Freedom: Tamil Identity and the Ethnic Fetish in Malaysia* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006) and *Tamils and the Haunting of Justice: History and Recognition in Malaysia's Plantations* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014).

2 One critique of the so-called "Indic" model of divine kingship that has been utilized by scholars such as Coedes, Geertz, and Wolters would be that it flattens a range of historical spiritual and political orders within South Asia into a coherent and uniform set of principles that are not born out of the historical study of divergent South Asian polities and the contested theologies therein.

3 The arrival of Islam in Southeast Asia, as numerous scholars have noted, also came via South Asian influences through trade. Moreover, Islam in South Asia has been deeply influenced by Hindu ideas of devotion and spiritual potency, particularly within Sufi mystical orders.

4 E. R. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Social Structure* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1954).

5 James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).

6 The culturist approach was mostly inspired by Louis Dumont's germ model for hierarchy, grounded in Brahminical ideas, developed in his grand opus *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications* (1970; repr. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

7 For example, within the Subaltern Studies Collective or earlier in F. G. Bailey's work. Within Southeast Asian studies the work of Hjorleifur Jonsson is quite relevant, particularly *Slow Anthropology: Negotiating Difference with the Iu Mien* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2014).

8 Ward Keeler, *The Traffic in Hierarchy: Masculinity and Its Others in Buddhist Burma* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017).

9 Gwedolyn I. O. Kelly, "Not Isolated, Actively Isolationist: Towards a Subaltern History of the Nilgiri Hills before British Imperialism," *Modern Asian Studies* 51, no. 4 (2017): 1035–69..

10 For excellent essays by Noble and Hockings, among others, see *Blue Mountains: The Ethnography and Biogeography of a South Indian Region*, ed. Paul Hockings (Delhi and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

11 The Nilgiris Field Learning Center is a collaborative project between Cornell University faculty and the Keystone Foundation, a nongovernmental organization working with indigenous communities in the Nilgiris for over twenty years on a range of issues relating to ecological systems, governance, rights, health, and livelihoods. Cornell undergraduates spend a semester in the Nilgiris each spring, studying the complex interrelationships between land and people in the biosphere, as well as conducting field research.

12 There are many Kurumba and Irula subcategories and designations. I am simply using the more general terms of distinction used in the Nilgiris.

13 This is an idea borrowed from Oliver Wolters's magisterial *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1999), 28). The idea that Wolters forwards is one in which "mandala" states and/or protostates expand and contract in relationship to the leader, chief, or king's spiritual "prowess," effectively fusing Hindu and pre-Hindu ideas of spiritual power in Southeast Asia.

14 This refers to the practice of biomedicine or allopathy superseding traditional forms of medical care.

Cornell's **CRITICAL ROLE** in Instruction of Southeast Asian Languages

Through a close collaboration between the Cornell Southeast Asia Program (SEAP) and the Department of Asian Studies, Cornell regularly offers multilevel instruction in Burmese, Filipino (Tagalog), Indonesian, Khmer (Cambodian), Thai, and Vietnamese—the six major national languages of Southeast Asia. Cornell is the only institution in North America to do so.

by Abby Cohn, professor of linguistics and SEAP director

THIS IS POSSIBLE IN PART THROUGH SEAP'S DESIGNATION as a Department of Education, Title VI program National Resource Center (continuously since the inception of the program).

Cornell has historically been a leader in the instruction and development of pedagogical materials for less commonly taught languages (LCTLs), starting with the founding of the Division of Modern Languages in 1946. It has played an especially important role in the teaching of Southeast Asian languages. With the founding of the Southeast Asia Program in 1950, SEAP's faculty were among the first in the nation to offer regular instruction in these languages, and SEAP Publications pioneered in publishing the first pedagogical materials for these languages available to an American audience. This profound commitment to instruction in these languages carries through to today, where these six languages are taught by full time (senior) lecturers who are all also actively involved in developing up-to-date innovative teaching materials and assessment tools (see language column page 22).

Offering instruction in these languages is part of the bedrock of Cornell's Southeast Asia Program, together with its internationally recognized faculty and library collections. Language training for graduate students, undergraduates, and on occasion interested faculty members is critical to all facets of the scholarly research and teaching missions of the Southeast Asia Program. As a national and international leader in instruction in these languages, Cornell also fulfills its responsibilities as

a National Resource Center in teaching, developing, and promoting instruction in the *least* commonly taught of the less commonly taught languages. It is worth developing this point to highlight the critical importance of Cornell's continued commitment in this regard, not just to Cornell but to the nation and beyond.

Following the Modern Language Association (MLA), LCTLs are defined as all languages not in the top fifteen, ranked according to student enrollment at US institutions of higher education. We see that instruction in any LCTL is a critical resource, as instruction in all of the LCTLs make up only 2.6 percent of total foreign language enrollment.

In this regard, if we consider population or global economic significance, Asian languages are greatly underrepresented, with only Japanese, Chinese, and Korean in the top fifteen. The Southeast Asian languages are particularly underrepresented. Consider the population of Southeast Asia at roughly 649 million with not one national language commonly taught compared to Western Europe at 193 million and accounting for seven of the most commonly taught languages. For example, Indonesian, the national language of the fourth most populous nation in the world, a member of the G20, is taught at less than twenty universities in the United States. Among the LCTLs we can make a further distinction between the leading less commonly taught languages and the least commonly taught. Considering the national languages of Southeast Asia, as shown in the following table, Vietnamese, Filipino (Tagalog), Indonesian, and Thai are among the leading fifteen Asian or Pacific less commonly taught languages, whereas Burmese and Khmer are among the least commonly taught of the less commonly taught languages.

What these numbers show is that Cornell is one of only a handful of institutions providing the opportunity for capacity building in this increasingly important region of the world. The significance of this commitment is nicely illustrated by Burmese. Cornell, one of only two institutions offering Burmese, for many years continued to do so despite the fact that Myanmar was closed to foreigners. With recent political developments, Cornell quickly expanded part-time instruction in Burmese to a multilevel program with a full-time instructor in order to meet the rapidly increased interest in Burmese and Myanmar. Because of its ongoing commitment to Southeast Asian language instruction, Cornell was able to quickly contribute to much needed capacity building in this region.

Cornell's language instructors and Cornell as an institution are also taking a lead role in collaboration with other institutions. As a designated US Department of Education Title VI Southeast Asia National Resource Center (NRC), Cornell works collaboratively with other Title VI centers across the United States and with the Council of Teachers of Southeast Asian Languages to support and promote instruction in these languages, with the intention of training future scholars and diplomats.

In September 2017, SEAP hosted the Southeast Asian Language Teaching: New Directions conference in collaboration with the Department of Asian Studies and the Language Resource Center in the College of Arts and Sciences (see page 21). This conference grew out of ongoing collaborations with the University of California, Berkeley and University of California, Los Angeles and the University of Wisconsin and was funded through Title VI NRC funds, with support from the Henry Luce Foundation. Representatives from all seven Southeast Asia NRCs participated, along with colleagues from a number of institutions offering instruction in one or more languages of Southeast Asia. All of Cornell's six language instructors participated in the conference and welcomed the opportunity to take on leadership roles and deepen collaborations with instructors from other institutions.

One of the most pressing tasks for us at SEAP is to ensure that our Southeast Asia language offerings flourish into the future. This includes not only the institutional commitment to these offerings, but also support for and recognition of our outstanding language instructors in their multifaceted roles as educators, curriculum developers, and collaborators at the national and international levels.

LEADING LESS COMMONLY TAUGHT LANGUAGES

(following MLA report Table 10c)

Language	*country*	*# speakers*	*# insts in N. Am*	*# students in N. Am*
Vietnamese	Vietnam	80M	43	2095
Filipino, Tagalog	Philippines	90M	30	1323
Indonesian	Indonesia	240M	17	385
Thai	Thailand	60M	22	286

LEAST COMMONLY TAUGHT OF THE LESS COMMONLY TAUGHT

(following MLA report Table 8, starting page 43, and Table 11, starting page 66)

Language	*country*	*# speakers*	*# insts in N. Am*	*# students in N. Am*
Khmer, Cambodian	Cambodia	14M	10	124
Burmese	Myanmar	33M	4	43

[1] David Goldberg, Dennis Looney, and Natalia Lusin, "Enrollments in Languages Other Than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Fall 2013," Modern Language Association, 2015, https://www.mla.org/content/download/31180/1452509/EMB_enrllmnts_nonEngl_2013.pdf.

[2] Two institutions list that they teach Indonesian/Malay. Three institutions list that they teach Malay, the national language of Malaysia and Brunei. The other national language of Southeast Asia, Lao, is not currently taught regularly during the academic year. It is offered when enrollments allow in the summer at the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute, hosted by University of Wisconsin–Madison.

[3] The Council of Teachers of Southeast Asian Languages, cotseal.net.

CONFERENCE ON SOUTHEAST ASIAN LANGUAGE TEACHING: NEW DIRECTIONS

An historic meeting of the Southeast Asian language teachers took place this year at the Conference on Southeast Asian Teaching: New Directions, September 8 to 10, 2017, at Cornell University. This conference was the largest-ever gathering of instructors of Southeast Asian languages, bringing together over seventy instructors of the major languages of Southeast Asia from across the United States and from as far away as Thailand. Instructors of the six major national languages of Southeast Asia—Burmese, Indonesian, Khmer, Filipino (Tagalog), Thai, and Vietnamese—and of the major regional language of the Philippines, Ilokano, gathered in Ithaca for an intensive three days to address pedagogical developments and innovations in the teaching of these languages.

It was a one-of-a-kind conference that included all the major stakeholders involved in the teaching of Southeast Asia languages in the United States; namely, language teachers, academics, and grant organizations and administrators. The event not only served as a catalyst to foster a stronger sense of camaraderie among all language teachers and encourage collaboration among different universities, but also to strengthen the field of teaching Southeast Asia languages.

For a full report and more photos visit the conference website: https://agh955.wixsite.com/sealangconference and the COTSEAL website http://cotseal.net/

"What I saw of the workshop was fabulous. The level of enthusiasm was impressive. As an administrator (non-language teacher), it was inspiring to see all these hard-working, deeply committed teachers working together to improve themselves and their field."

—Mike Cullinane, associate director of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies and faculty associate in the Department of History at University of Wisconsin-Madison

"Thank you for organizing this conference and providing support for language teachers who have limited travel support from their own institutions to attend out-of-state conferences like this. We really appreciate everything you have done for us."

"Inspiring and impressive conference. Well-organized with great vibes!"

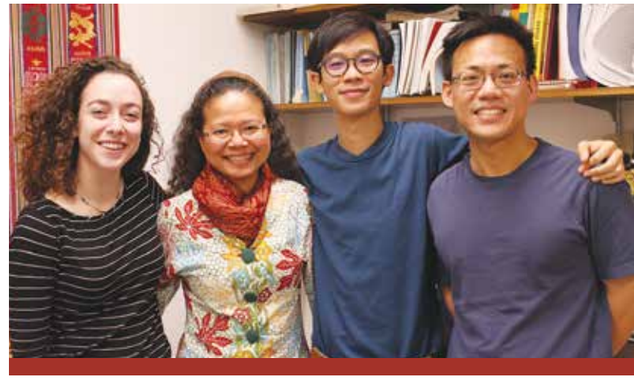
"Make this conference an annual event!"

—Anonymous conference participants

Hear from SEAP's Language Instructors

What's It Like to Study a Southeast Asian Language at Cornell?

JOLANDA PANDIN, senior lecturer of Indonesian



Both undergraduates and graduate students study Indonesian at Cornell for a variety of reasons. Undergraduates often study Indonesian at all levels because of connections with friends, family background, experience traveling in the country, or hearing that Indonesian is an easy Asian language to learn. Graduate students mostly need the language for their degree and future field research and are scattered across all levels.

The introductory course includes a project on Indonesia or Malaysia and often culminates in study abroad in Southeast Asia. Students in this course are expected to be capable of rudimentary daily conversation, behaving appropriately in Indonesian settings with regard to language use and other behavior, and understanding the history and current place of Indonesia in Southeast Asia.

The elementary-level students are expected to be able to express daily needs, discuss everyday topics, and read simple authentic texts. The intermediates are expected to be able to discuss simple real-life issues in complex phrases and sentences, read simple authentic reading materials and guided interviews, and write short and simple compositions. The advanced students are expected to study and discuss published newspaper articles, academic writings, and online news or videos and write and present short academic papers.

One of the most challenging aspects of learning Indonesian for English-speaking students at the introductory and elementary levels is the pronunciation of particular sounds such as vowels [a, e], unaspirated consonants [p, t, k. g, d], nasal sounds [ng, ny], and intonation. At the intermediate and advanced levels, students confront any carryover issues they have had difficulty mastering at the elementary level as well as foreign language-influenced pronunciation of loan words and passive structures.

Collaborative projects and conferences with other universities have brought significant changes to the structure of the program and the main and supplementary materials used in class. The methodology used has changed from an audio-lingual method to a communicative approach, though the audio-lingual materials published by John Wolff are still used as the main reference for the current materials. Now Indonesian is the medium of instruction for all courses, even the introductory and elementary courses.

YU YU KHAING, lecturer of Burmese

At Cornell, a mix of all kinds of students—both undergraduate and graduate students—study Burmese. In many cases most have never been to Myanmar (Burma), but some have visited briefly or have a family background ("legacy students") where parents are fluent speakers and thus, they are quite familiar with the pronunciation and basic vocabulary but have little or no exposure to the formal written style. Many students of Burmese strive to be able to do independent research on a topic related to Myanmar (Burma), its history, culture, literature, or other aspects. The country has been quite secluded for decades, so most aspects of it have not been previously explored; thus, there are plenty of topics open for serious study.

The essential building blocks of the Burmese language program at Cornell are the Burmese script and phonemes (sounds), including tones. Attention is given to correct pronunciation and reading the script rather than the English transcription. From the beginning, emphasis is put on natural speaking in day-to-day settings and around familiar topics, as well as writing in a colloquial style. At the intermediate level, the formal style of writing is introduced, and the material is oriented more toward current affairs. For advanced students, the focus shifts toward topics close to students' fields of research.

Given the relatively small number of students studying Burmese at Cornell, the learning experience is highly personalized and can be tailored to the needs and interests of the individual student, especially at the advanced level. Recently, extensive online materials have been developed, including audio files and exercises.

After one year of study, students learn to read and write simple texts and to converse about everyday situations such as talking about yourself and your family, food, moving around on foot and by taxi, etc. After two years of study, the students will have a good command of all common grammar structures, be able to produce short essays regarding their daily lives or their chosen field of specialization, and comprehend most written material with the help of a dictionary, even though full comprehension of the cultural and literary contexts may still prove somewhat challenging.

One of the biggest challenges of learning Burmese for English-speaking students is the difficulty they have grasping tones (and remembering which tone a word should have). For Burmese, the tone is an inextricable part of the sound of the word, but for speakers of nontonal languages it is easily seen as an add-on. It is also often hard for students to fully grasp the context of written material. Even though every word can be looked up, it can be hard to get the full meaning of a paragraph.

HANNAH PHAN, senior lecturer of Khmer

I teach Khmer at beginning through advanced levels to students with a wide variety of backgrounds and interests. Learners of Khmer include graduate and undergraduate students from different departments and schools such as the departments of Asian Studies, Government, Linguistics, History of Art, Development Sociology, History, Anthropology; the School of Industrial and Labor Relations; the School of Hotel Administration; the Cornell Institute for Public Affairs; and the Cornell Law School, etc. Some students are preparing to study abroad in the Cornell in Cambodia winter session course. The graduate students are usually interested in doing research on topics related to Cambodia such as politics, culture, art, history, linguistics, development sociology, etc.

A smaller number of students are heritage learners who grew up at home speaking Khmer and want to more deeply connect to their roots as well as improve their reading and writing skills. I also teach faculty and staff—respected scholars such as Andrew Mertha, professor of government, and Greg Green, curator of the Echols Southeast Asia Collection in Cornell University Library.

To spark the interest of my students, I include in the curriculum a wide variety of topics, ranging from government, history, ancient arts, linguistics, anthropology, hospitality, etc. Students learn all four basic skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). The curriculum follows the performance-based interactive pedagogical philosophy. Students learn Khmer through regular communication.

At the end of the first year of studying Khmer, students will know the alphabet as well as many words, sentences, and grammar and sentence structure. They will be able to read short texts, develop listening skills, articulate sounds, communicate in basic conversation, and write short essays. In the intermediate course, students enjoy reading short texts taken from Khmer folktales. In the advanced course, students learn to communicate in everyday conversation using complex questions and answers. They become proficient in listening to long texts and conversations and can read long stories, Cambodian folktales, novels, and books, as well as write complex essays/texts about various aspects of Cambodian life and culture. The directed studies course is for advanced students and is designed based on their particular interests.

One of the challenges of learning Khmer for English-speaking students is that after learning the language in the classroom, students may go to do work in Cambodia, but when they talk to local people they have difficulty following what people say. After staying in the country for a while, however, students can master the language, and they can understand local people better.

Recently, the Khmer language program has changed in both quantity and quality. The new introductory course, Khmer 1100, has been increasingly popular. That course expands offerings to students who do not have the time in their schedules to take the regular four-credit Khmer course. After taking Khmer 1100, students often express interest in doing the four-credit course. In terms of the quality, I have updated written and audiovisual materials. I wrote supplementary materials to assist students in learning the language. I also filmed interviews with Cambodian people in-country. With support from SEAP as well as the Department of Asian Studies and the Language Resource Center, I developed and updated those materials for use in the classroom.

THUY TRANVIET, senior lecturer of Vietnamese

Students of all majors from all colleges study Vietnamese at Cornell for both personal and academic reasons, though in the classroom I prioritize conversation and comprehension. Some heritage students want to learn Vietnamese to be able to talk to their families. The advanced level students often strive to be able to read texts in Vietnamese and to conduct research in the country.

At Cornell, we offer three to four levels of Vietnamese: elementary, intermediate, advanced, and independent study (beyond advanced). We also offer a one-credit "jump start" course to introduce learners to the language and the country. After learning one year of Vietnamese, students can get along pretty well in the country applying learned skills to express, ask, and maintain basic conversations. They are able to talk on a variety of topics such as where they are from, their address, telephone number, subjects of study, year in school, family, hobbies, as well as dates and time. They know how to shop for clothes and other items at the market and can order food at restaurants. Some of the biggest challenges for English-speakers learning Vietnamese are terms of address, the pronunciation of vowels, and tones in the language.

The Vietnamese language program has evolved over the years, especially digitally with the development of more online supplementary materials that greatly assist students. At the end of the day, learning a language requires time, discipline, and a commitment to practicing both in and outside of the classroom.

NGAMPIT JAGACINSKI, senior lecturer of Thai

At Cornell, there are regular Thai language classes that give students the opportunity to learn and progress to an advanced level of proficiency and beyond. There is a one-credit course, T1100, for a short-term visitor to experience the language and culture of Thailand. In addition, Cornell offers sequences of courses at the intermediate and advanced levels for heritage students and students with special interests in reading and writing. Two new four-credit courses, Elementary Thai T1121 and T1122, were offered in Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 (replacing the six-credit courses of T1101 and T1102).

Depending on the depth of study, students of Thai at Cornell can learn basic vocabulary to "get around" in daily life and gain fundamental knowledge of reading and writing in Thai script. All three language skills (speaking, reading, and writing) are incorporated into the learning at all proficiency levels (beginning, intermediate, advanced, and near-native level). The most challenging aspect of learning Thai for English-speaking students is the tones. Thai, unlike English, is a tonal language.

Both undergraduate and graduate students study Thai at Cornell. Most students study Thai either because of general interests in Thailand or to conduct graduate research work in various fields. Many of these students have never been to Thailand.

MARIA THERESA SAVELLA, senior lecturer of Filipino (Tagalog)

Filipino is offered in the Department of Asian Studies at various levels: beginning, intermediate, and advanced. In addition, there is a one-credit introductory course on the elements of language and culture and an independent study course with variable credits.

Both graduate and undergraduate students at Cornell study Filipino. The majority of them are Filipino-American undergraduates who would like to learn about their roots and communicate better with their family and relatives in the target language. There are also graduate students who study Filipino because proficiency in the language is necessary to conduct their research. Most of the Filipino-American undergraduate students have been to the Philippines but not the graduate students.

At Cornell, the beginning level of Filipino gives students a thorough grounding in basic speaking and listening skills, with an introduction to reading and writing. The intermediate level continues to develop all four skills: reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension. Content is given more focus at this level, and some of the topics covered are food, seasons, various forms of art, overseas Filipino workers, and indigenous rituals and performances.

The advanced level continues instruction in conversational skills but with an emphasis on reading and writing. Selected Filipino films and core readings on various topics such as gender, history, politics, and indigenous groups and their cultures are used. Students, in consultation with the instructor, may select some of the class or reading materials. The independent study is intended to provide a venue for exploring students' interests and needs using the target language.

Depending on their learning aptitude, after three years of instruction students can acquire levels of proficiency between novice-high and intermediate-high (based on proficiency guidelines set by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages). One of the most challenging aspects of learning Filipino for English-speaking students is the complex morphological structure of Filipino grammar.

With the switch to a communicative pedagogical approach, supplementary materials for all the levels have been developed since 2002, and the textbook Pilipino through Self-Instruction has been used for grammar reference. The collaborative work of a group of Filipino instructors produced Filipino Oral Proficiency Guidelines, which the participants hope can be helpful in the standardization of assessment and in curriculum design for the Filipino language program at various educational institutions in the country.

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[1] John U. Wolff, Maria Theresa C. Centeno, and Der-Hwa V.Rau, *Pilipino through Self-Instruction* (Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2002).

Enchanted Asia

The Echols Collection

Above: Woodblock print of a kabuki actor portraying famous villain Nikki Danjo, a courtier skilled in the magical arts of ninjitsu. The shape-shifter has just used his magic skills to transform from a giant rat back to human shape after stealing an important scroll from, Kunisada: The Kabuki Actor Portraits *by Kunisada Utagawa, 1993.*

Right: Carved mask of wood and buffalo hide represents Rangda, vengeful widow and queen of the witches from, Masks of Bali: Spirits of an Ancient Drama *by Judy Slattum, 1992.*

THE CURRENT EXHIBIT in the Asia Collections at Kroch library, *Enchanted Asia*, explores sorcery, witchcraft, spells, rituals, and "magic" in Asia and the various means people have used to protect against bad fortune or to empower themselves.

by Carole E. Atkinson,
information and reference contact
for the Asia Collections

SOME OF THE LEGENDARY SORCERERS AND WITCHES highlighted in the exhibit are Zhang Daoling (Zhang Tianshi, ca. 34–156 CE), founder of the Way of the Celestial Masters in Daoism. According to legends, he lived one hundred twenty-two years and was also a geomancer, alchemist, magician, and exorcist.[1]

Abe no Seimei was a court *onmyogi* in the Heian period (794–1185 CE) in Japan. He was a yin-yang master and specialist in magic, divination, geomancy, and exorcism in the Bureau of Onmyo, whose *onmyogi* had the responsibility of using their skills to protect the capital from malevolent forces.

The legends of the widow-witch Rangda of Bali may have origins in the stories about the real Queen Mahendratta, mother of King Erlangga (d. 1049 CE), who was banished for practicing sorcery. Alone and enraged that no one would marry her daughter, she transformed into a witch (with Durga's help) and took out her fury on the people.[2]

Beware the flying aswang *manananggal* of the Philippines (similar to the Indonesian *kuyang*), a witch that is in human form in daytime, but at night the lower half of its body stays hidden on the ground while its top half floats along with entrails hanging, searching for prey.

In addition to items about sorcerers and witches, our exhibit contains lore on black magic such as the Japanese "Ushi no koku mairi," the Hour of the Ox ritual ceremony. Taking place between 1 a.m. and 3 a.m., a *wara ningyo*, or straw figure representing the cursed person, is nailed to a sacred tree.

Gu or *ku* magic of southern China is believed to be very powerful. The early character for *gu* depicted a pot with crawling animals. To create this black magic, five poisonous creatures (a scorpion, centipede, viper, frog, and lizard) are put into a container on the fifth day of the fifth moon. The one left alive possesses great power. It is sacrificed and made into a liquid, its poison then used in food or drinks to control or harm others. Only the *gu*-creator has the antidote.

Persons who believe they have been victims of black magic might visit certain Thai shamans who specialize in counteracting it. For example, using an egg, a shaman may roll it on the subject's body to locate the harmful article secreted in the body. He then "extracts" it using a second egg, which is broken open to reveal the deleterious item, perhaps a nail, a gob of hair, or other foreign material.

The exhibit also features photographs of objects that have been used for divination. These include ancient Chinese oracle bones that were used not only to record transactions of daily life, but also to reveal to diviners answers to queries—for example, whether it was auspicious to proceed with a certain course of action. The bones would be inscribed, heated over fire, and the resulting pattern of cracks studied and interpreted by the diviners.

The thirteenth-century bronze geomantic tablet pictured in our exhibit was made by Islamic metalworker Muhammad ibn Khutlukh al Mawsili. It contains a series of slides and dials that the geomancer opens and sets according to the inscribed instructions. Various configurations of dots appear. The final semicircular panel provides the meaning of the patterns to the geomancer.

What forms of protection have been employed to ensure good fortune or protect against evil? Amulets, such as the amulet against the evil eye in our exhibit, can be worn around the neck, carried on one's person, or inserted under the skin like a magical microchip (President Marcos of the Philippines is said to have had an amulet in his back). Spirit shirts or tabards with written incantations, magic diagrams, and images give extra strength or protection to the wearer. Tattoos can be especially powerful if inked by tattoo masters and chanted into life by these *arjan* in special ceremonies. As one Thai master said, "I know the secret code I have worked into the tattooed spells . . . some designs are so powerful, I change them to prevent the wearer from going insane.[3]

All are welcome to view the *Enchanted Asia* exhibit, which runs through March 2018, any time the Olin/Kroch library is open. Wear your favorite lucky charm!

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1 A geomancer uses his divination skills to determine, for instance, a good location for a burial site or for orienting a plan for a town or a dwelling, or for advising on travel in a certain direction. It is based on Taoist belief in the energies of the earth and the auspicious or inauspicious configuration of earth's features in a particular area (similar to feng shui).

2 Durga is a very popular Hindu goddess who has many incarnations and names, including Devi and Shakti ("feminine energy"), consort of Shiva. She is a powerful demon-slaying Hindu warrior; each of her eight arms holds a weapon. The witch Rangda uses Durga's power to conjure up her wrathful retribution.

3 Michael McCabe, *Tattoos of Indochina: Magic, Devotion, and Protection* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer, 2002).

Left & Right: Kids studying Thai at Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC) as part of the Afterschool Language and Culture program.

Below: Beverly J. Martin Elementary School Enrichment Program students in Hindi class with Vanisha Sharma, a Master's student in Public Administration at Cornell.

Learning Language through Culture

The Cornell Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies' Afterschool Language and Culture Program

by Akida Aierken, former graduate outreach assistant, Cornell Southeast Asia Program

Cross-cultural understanding is incredibly important in a globalized world.

STUDYING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE, especially at a young age can, not only open children's minds, but also increase their understanding of various cultures. In order to expose K–6 students to a wide array of cultures and languages, SEAP, in collaboration with five other area studies programs of the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies, initiated the Afterschool Language and Culture Program. Through this program, SEAP finds graduate student volunteers to teach foreign languages in local afterschool programs. The six-week-long classes focus on teaching students language through engaging cultural activities such as games, crafts, cooking, and dancing.

In order to support volunteers in their lesson planning, the Einaudi Center's digitized lending library provides educational books, DVDs, and culture kits that include such items as traditional clothes, art, puppets, and textiles of different cultures from around the world. These resources, prepared by experts at Cornell University, are geared for use in K–12 and community college settings and were created to engage both educators and students in developing a deeper understanding of foreign cultures and languages.

SEAP has collaborated with local Beverly J. Martin Elementary school (BJM), Greater Ithaca Activities Center, and Cayuga Heights Elementary school, and has recently ran Burmese, Hindi, and Thai language and culture classes in their afterschool/enrichment programs.

Connecting Diverse Communities

Aye Min Thant, a Cornell master's student of Asian studies, taught Burmese classes at BJM in spring 2016. "I started the first class by using the Burmese culture kits provided by SEAP to stimulate children's interests in this unique culture," said Aye. From the second class, she started teaching the alphabet and other basic vocabulary through songs. She also encouraged students to practice speaking Burmese to school staff by teaching them brief self-introductions. A unit on food vocabulary involved homemade Burmese food tastings.

Aye believes that the afterschool language and culture program benefits children in many different ways. "It exposes kids to the diversity of language and culture that exists in the world and promotes a curious and respectful exploration of that diversity. Many of my students mentioned that they started greeting their Burmese-speaking friends and neighbors using what they learned in the program." Aye feels that teaching language through culture teaches students that language and culture influence one another.

Long-term Impact of Language Learning on Children

Marie Vitucci, the Beverly J. Martin Elementary school enrichment coordinator, has been offering the Cornell Afterschool Language and Culture program at BJM for more than two years. She feels that this type of enrichment program gives children the opportunity to learn another language, which is typically not offered in the elementary school curriculum. "It encourages second through fifth graders at BJM Academic Plus to learn both the culture and language from a variety of countries." In addition to the short-term outcomes and benefits, Marie believes that the language and culture studying experience can have a long-term impact on participants. "Kids will tell me everything they have learned, including their names in other languages. The excitement and knowledge they gain is a great way to encourage their interests as they develop into lifelong learners." One of the goals of the Afterschool Language and Culture Program is to expose children to languages early in life and encourage them to continue their learning when such options are available in middle and high school.

Looking Ahead: Growing the Program

The Afterschool Language and Culture Program is continually seeking school partners and volunteer teachers. Introducing children to different languages and cultures is vital to building tolerance across cultural differences. It can also benefit children as they grow into adults and enter the global job market.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION on the Afterschool Language and Culture Program:
https://seap.einaudi.cornell.edu/afterschool-language-and-culture-program

Lending Library: https://seap.einaudi.cornell.edu/lending-library

GLOBAL VOICES IN EDUCATION DISCUSSION SERIES

IN FALL 2017, SEAP, in collaboration with the Cornell South Asia Program and the education minor, launched Global Voices in Education, a dynamic series of speakers stimulating conversations on and from international voices in the field of education. Sharing the global perspectives of Cornell faculty engaged in international service learning, Fulbright English teaching assistants, cultural educators and human rights advocates, school teachers teaching about global migration, and many others, this series aimed to prepare future teachers to engage students in international issues and to help them become global citizens.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: On Campus and Beyond

SEAP WELCOMED ACADEMIC VISITOR AND INDONESIAN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTOR NURLAELA JUM

IN FALL 2017, SEAP welcomed academic visitor Nurlaela Jum. She is an Indonesian language instructor from South Sulawesi province who was funded by the Indonesian Language Diplomacy Agency of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia to assist SEAP's efforts to promote Indonesian language and culture. In addition to assisting with Cornell lecturer Jolanda Pandin's Indonesian classes, she taught Indonesian to children at Beverly J. Martin Elementary School through the Cornell Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies' Afterschool Language and Culture Program. Jum also taught Indonesian to adults at the Tompkins County Public Library.

One of the strengths of Jum's lessons in both the adult and children's classes was how she facilitated opportunities for students to teach each other. For the adult class, Jum gave her students the opportunity to research some aspect of Indonesian culture and present it to the rest of the class, successfully engaging all students with this assignment. In the children's class, when one student was absent from the previous class, Jum prompted the other students to help their classmate catch up on the missed lessons.

Some words from Jum:

I am a graduate of the State University of Makassar (UNM). I received my master's degree in language education in 2015. While in my third semester of my undergraduate program at the university, I began teaching English and later began teaching Indonesian, as well. In addition to teaching during my undergraduate years, I began working as a translator for people who do not yet know English.

My friends and my colleagues find me an optimistic and self-motivated person. They also believe that I have excellent communication skills. In addition to the experiences above, I have organized a variety of programs that pertain to language and culture in different domains. I have experience working with scholars at UNM to form a program for international students who want to both learn to speak the Indonesian language and to adjust to this new culture. Additionally, I was given an incredible privilege of volunteering to teach Indonesian to a group of Bugis-speaking elementary students in the village of Bone in southern Sulawesi.

I enjoy embracing new life challenges because it expands my horizon. When my contract at UNM had ended, my friends and I decided to branch out and build a new school, Alekawa Language and Culture Center. This school is engaged in the language and culture I am most passionate about. Because my friends and I love meeting new people and finding ways to help them, we strive to make our school a home for learning languages (Indonesian, English, and local languages) and growing in understanding the way their speakers live.

While running the school, I am also one of the teachers for the Indonesian Language Diplomacy Agency of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia. I am tasked with promoting the Indonesian language and our culture abroad. This year I am assigned to Cornell University. In addition to exploring languages and teaching, in my spare time I enjoy reading and dancing, especially traditional Indonesian dances.

CELEBRATE 25 YEARS of The Kahin Center by Helping Us Prepare It for Another 25 Years

by Thamora Fishel, SEAP associate director

Calling all alumni and friends of SEAP...

IT MAY BE HARD TO BELIEVE that the Kahin Center has been the heart and home of SEAP for 25 years! In honor of this milestone, and to dedicate our efforts to ensuring that the building is in good shape for another 25 years, we are taking advantage of Cornell's upcoming "Day of Giving" to launch a fundraising campaign to make major repairs and renovations to the Kahin Center.

For SEAP alumni who were in the program from the early 90s onward, the Kahin Center probably evokes many fond memories. For me these include the late nights/early mornings spent writing my dissertation—fueled by Ben & Jerry's Cherry Garcia ice cream and cinnamon pop tarts. The main room brings to mind a whole series of memorable brown bag lectures—including Ben Anderson's discussion of images of hell from a Thai monastery and his regular attendance at the weekly Thursday talks where he would sit in shorts in the back of the room and surprise guest speakers with penetrating questions. The meals and receptions and language class potlucks mingle together with some of the best conferences and symposia I have had the pleasure of attending at the Kahin Center.

For me, the Kahin Center predates email and the web, and I now look back fondly at the flyer-folding gatherings of the student committee from when paper was the only way to let everyone know about upcoming events. I celebrated the completion of my PhD in the building along with a dear SEAP friend in the government department who finished the same year. Weddings and baby showers and other rites of passage have been celebrated in the rooms that have been used to host VIP delegations from Indonesia, Thailand, and elsewhere in the region. At one point graduate students with offices in the Kahin Center insisted that the chair in the elevator was for the ghost of Oliver Wolters, and during a recent clean out, decorations from Halloween parties long past were found hiding among musty stacks of journals in the basement. Perhaps many of us will have bits of our spirits linger in the building to catch a few strains of the Filipino rondalla rehearsing or to catch a glimpse of the "coconut boys" rehearsing a dance number for an appearance at the spring banquet.

Twenty-five years ago this past May, the Kahin Center was dedicated with speeches by dignitaries gathered under a tent in front of the main entrance. Provost Mal Nesheim ceremonially handed the keys to a beaming George Kahin who was still an active emeritus member of the program. When SEAP moved into 640 Stewart Avenue, there was a powerful sense of nostalgia for 102 West Avenue, the original SEAP building that occupied what is now a parking lot behind the Law School. After years of uncertainty and comradery in a condemned building, when SEAP graduate students, faculty, and staff moved into an elegant and imposing mansion, it marked an important coming-of-age and point of stabilization for the program. The generational shift from the founding members of the program was well underway, and the strong fiscal infrastructure that they had built with major endowments from the Rockefeller, Mellon, Luce, and Ford Foundations was finally matched by a solid physical home, thanks to the efforts of the faculty and the SEAP Advisory Council. At the dedication, many quipped about the challenge "to be sure that the program continues to be better than the building." The renovation of 640 Stewart Avenue brought it up to code and accessibility standards while maintaining the historic character of the stately home built by Robert Treman in 1902. Installations of Southeast Asian art provided the finishing touch and fit gorgeously with the wood paneling and views of Cayuga Lake.

A large photograph of 102 West Avenue still hangs on the wall behind the lectern, and each new cohort of graduate students picks up and adds to the corpus of SEAP lore. Writing groups spring up in the seminar room for mutual support when semester deadlines approach, and some students pay extra respect to the Buddha that stands watch over their studies. The availability of WiFi has changed some patterns in the building, and cell phones have replaced the shared phone lines that I reluctantly used to answer while trying to write. The rhythm of the weekly Thursday lecture series provides a steady pulse around which most activity in the building revolves. In other words, the Kahin Center is still very much the "spiritual epicenter" of SEAP—to use George Kahin's words. Contributing to the Kahin Center Building Fund to undertake major maintenance and repair work is an investment in the continuity of a vibrant intellectual community—one in which many of us still take part, no matter how long ago or how recently we finished our time in the program. I hope that you will join us in these efforts.

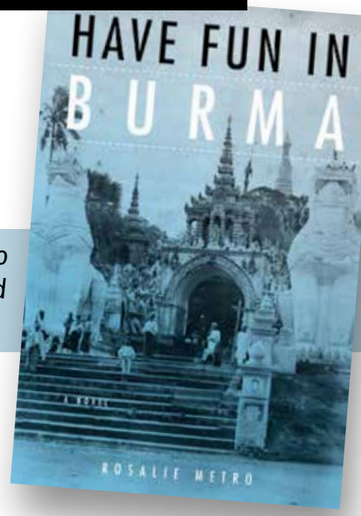
SEAP already has $20K pledged in matching funds and your gift will help us tap into those funds. To make a gift, please visit the SEAP website https://seap.einaudi.cornell.edu/ and click the button on the top right labeled "Give to Global Cornell." Enter the amount under "Other-Global Cornell" and in the instructions box, please specify "SEAP-Kahin Center Building Fund."

BOOK REVIEW

Have Fun in Burma: A Novel

Rosalie Metro, PhD 2011
(DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2018)

reviewed by Thamora Fishel, SEAP associate director



When a naïve, well-meaning young American volunteering in Myanmar tries to make a positive difference in the world, she unintentionally wreaks havoc and up-ends the lives of multiple people.

Have Fun in Burma is a fun read. Its evocative descriptions capture the disorienting sights, sounds, and smells encountered by the main character in the Buddhist monastery and school in Yangon, where she serves for three months as an English teacher. Adela Frost is constantly thrust out of her comfort zone and confronted repeatedly by her lack of knowledge and insight. She is aware of her white, colonial privilege on an intellectual level, yet she struggles to grasp how her own attitudes and values are part of these larger patterns, and how her words and actions can have real-life consequences.

Adela's time in Burma is not exactly fun. The ironic title of the novel is underscored by the fact that Adela never even visits any of Burma's tourist destinations, not even the romanticized Shwedagon Pagoda of her dreams, represented in a sepia image from the colonial era on the cover. Instead, we get portrayals of her visceral reactions to decrepit hospitals, cockroaches and rats in bathrooms with squat toilets, and the deafening buzz of noise in a crowded school where children repeat after their teachers in rote unison. Without discounting the spiritual elements of Buddhism, the novel traces Adela's discovery that Buddhism in Myanmar is made up of beliefs and an intricate web of everyday practices, exchanges, and relationships. While she tries to embrace Buddhist teachings and meditation, it does not dampen her romantic impulses or prevent serious blunders and lapses of judgment.

The romantic image of Burma as a serene Buddhist country on a path to reform and democratization is also undercut in this tale. Readers are confronted by the confusing complexities that underlie the persecution of the country's Muslim minority, particularly in Rakhine state, where hundreds of thousands have fled into neighboring Bangladesh. Unlike much of the reporting on this topic, Adela's vantage allows for a more nuanced glimpse into the deep prejudices held by many in Buddhist Myanmar. As Adela struggles to come to terms with how a vocal majority, including many Buddhist monks, could so vehemently deny the Rohingya a right to belong in Myanmar, we are drawn into her dilemma of how to be culturally sensitive while taking action to oppose a pattern of violence and oppression that has many of the hallmarks of ethnic cleansing.

This unabashed coming-of-age story explores the double-edged transformative power of international study and engagement. As Adela reflects in the introduction, "Now, the image of the moon above the Shwedagon seems like a still from a movie poster: not a lie, but just one face of the story. I dreamed it before I'd heard the word *kala* spit from someone's mouth like a stone, before I'd heard of the people who call themselves Rohingya, before I knew there were Muslims in Burma at all. I keep coming back to that one image of the Shwedagon, of Buddhism, of Burma, even though now I can only see it through the filter of other memories . . . I come back to that image of the Shwedagon because I miss being an eighteen-year-old girl whose worst offence was dreaming of a place she had never been."

Metro's novel deftly captures the current moment and the questions and concerns our own undergraduate (or even high school) students might raise. Having cast a young American high school graduate as the protagonist, it would have been all too easy for this story to slip into didactic oversimplification. The fact that the novel works so well, despite the fact that Metro deprives us of the pleasurable fiction of seeing Burma through Burmese eyes, is testament to Metro's skill at storytelling. More like a snapshot in comparison to a sweeping epic film, this short novel cannot convey the drama of the long durée of Burmese history and race relations the way Amitav Ghosh (2000) does in his masterful *The Glass Palace*. But we can learn a lot from snapshots, and Metro has given us a snapshot worth considering and sharing.

At the core of this story of three life-changing months in Burma is a critique of "voluntourism" that may resonate more powerfully than the most persuasive, thoughtful essay on the topic. In this snapshot of a novel many readers will identify with Adela—some of us unwillingly, hoping to see ourselves in the more culturally adept NGO worker, or perhaps in the professor who helps Adela return to a practice of meditation and come to terms with her experiences in Burma. Regardless of where we are on the spectrum of personal growth and cross-cultural competency, we can appreciate Adela's sense of disorientation abroad and upon her return to the United States. While the challenges and inevitable pitfalls of trying to connect across cultural boundaries are never minimized, Adela's brief love affair with Thiha and her friendship with Daw Pancavati are nonetheless meaningful and mutual. Readers interested in Burma, and Southeast Asia more broadly, will find rich descriptions and insights to ponder. But for me, the value of this book—and why I would love to teach it—lies in its ability to show rather than to tell us about our blind spots.

Rosalie Metro *is an anthropologist of education who has been researching Burma/Myanmar since 2000. She is a SEAP alumna and has also partnered with SEAP Outreach on various initiatives. She holds a PhD from Cornell University and is currently an assistant teaching professor in the College of Education at the University of Missouri–Columbia.*

UPCOMING EVENTS...

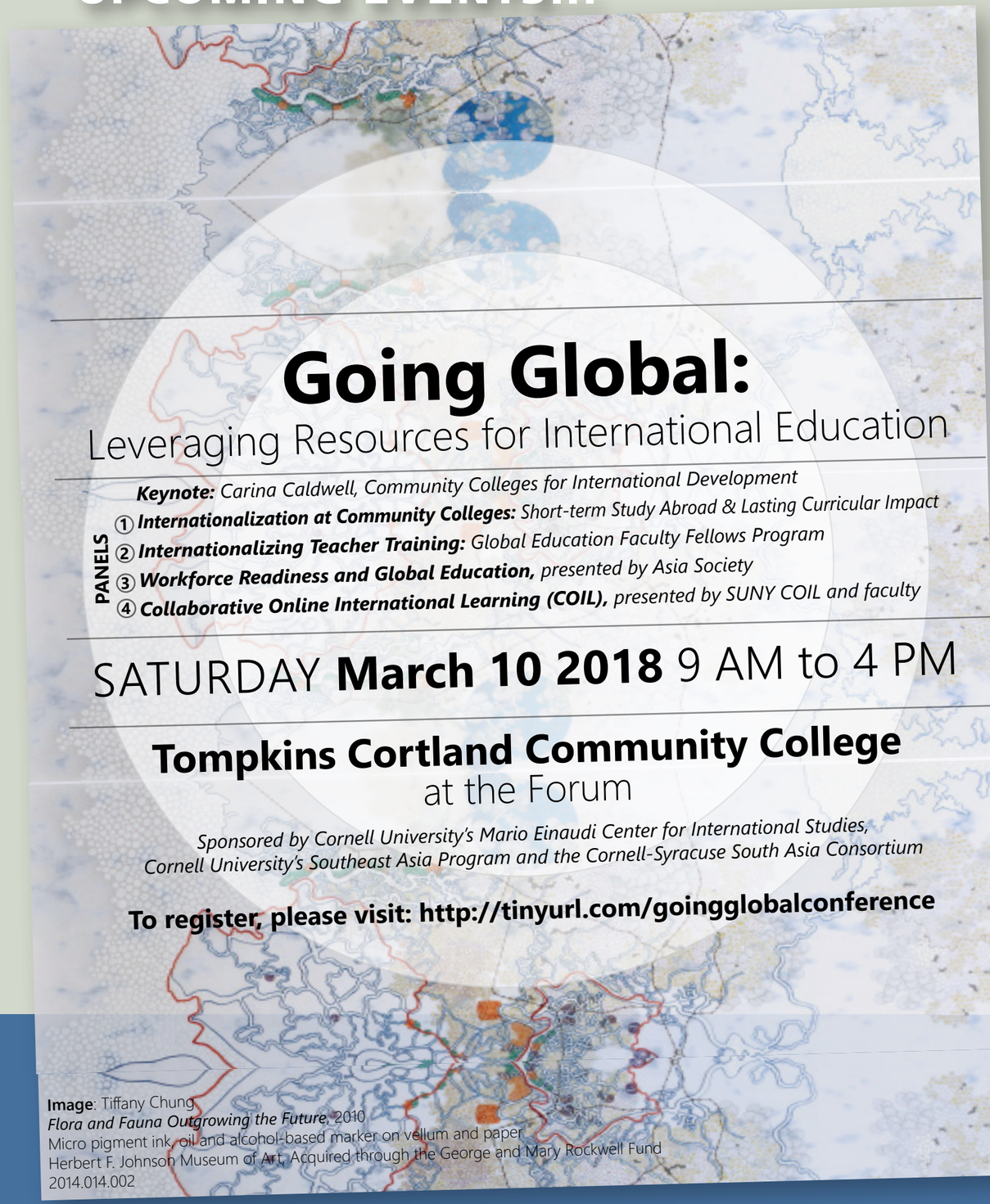


Image: Tiffany Chung
Flora and Fauna Outgrowing the Future, 2010
Micro pigment ink, oil and alcohol-based marker on vellum and paper
Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Acquired through the George and Mary Rockwell Fund
2014.014.002

March 9–11

SEAP Graduate Conference

Kahin Center

The title Possession and Persuasion conjures a range of images and concepts, from cultural performance, to the control and mobility of objects, bodies, and spaces, to modes of coercion, influence, and authority. These terms also evoke possibilities of resistance and transformation. How are entanglements of subjectivity and materiality at work across Southeast Asia? How have possessions and persuasions, broadly imagined, organized studies of Southeast Asia, and to what futures do they beckon? Professor Chiara Formichi from the Department of Asian Studies at Cornell will deliver the keynote address.

March 28

Artist's Talk

Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art
2:30 PM

Javanese artist Jompet Kuswidananto will discuss his work at this talk held in conjunction with the Spring 2018 course "Performing Objects/ Collecting Cultures" (ARTH 4851), taught by Professor Kaja McGowan.

Becker House
7:30 PM

As a Becker Artist in Residence, Jompet will be presenting for the Becker House Café Series.


photo courtesy of the artist

Jompet Kuswidananto, On Paradise (detail), 2017

FOR THE FULL LISTING of the Spring 2018 weekly Gatty lectures, visit: https://seap.einaudi.cornell.edu/

March 29–31

Sounding out the State of Indonesian Music: The Fourth State of the Field Conference of the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project

Indonesianist ethnomusicologists join forces with practitioners from around and outside academia to assess the current state of Indonesian music and Indonesian music research. Examinations of ongoing efforts to invigorate traditional musics, the challenges faced by ascendent facets of Indonesia's many music scenes, and the growing interest in sound beyond music will address intersections of music and sound with gender, religion, media, economy, politics, and civil society.

March 29

Klenèngan: Gamelan from Java

Memorial Room of Willard Straight Hall | 7:00 PM

A touring group of master Javanese musicians, joined by Cornell Gamelan Ensemble members and guests, present gamelan music in the more typical, expansive, and relaxed format known as klenèngan. This performance is held in conjunction with Sounding out the State of Indonesian Music, the fourth State of the Field conference of the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project.

April 9–13

Southeast Asia Language Week

The third annual Southeast Asia Language Week will consist of a week full of fun activities embracing Southeast Asian culture and promoting language study. Find out how you can get involved in SEAP and study a Southeast Asian language in the undergraduate or graduate section of the SEAP website: https://seap.einaudi.cornell.edu.

April 13–14

Kings and Dictators: The Legacy of Monarchy and the New Authoritarianism in Asia

Kahin Center

Jointly arranged by the Southeast Asia Program, South Asia Program, East Asia Program, and Comparative Muslim Societies Program, this conference investigates the history and legacy of monarchy in Asia as well as the current rise of authoritarianism. Presentations and discussions will concern both monarchy in history or today, and how today's new dictators draw on the legacies of monarchy for the legitimation and mystification of their power and position across Asia.

AWARDS

Foreign Language Area Studies Recipients, Academic Year 2017–2018

Name	Discipline	Language
Juan Fernandez	History	Indonesian
Mary Kate Long	Asian Studies	Burmese
Mary Moroney	Linguistics	Thai
Jaynel Santos	Landscape Architecture	Tagalog
Darin Self	Government	Indonesian
Brittain Sluder	City and Regional Planning	Indonesian

Foreign Language Area Studies Recipients, Summer 2017

Name	Discipline	Language
Charlie Accurso	Linguistics	Vietnamese
Margaret Cora Jack	Information Science	Khmer
Mary Moroney	Linguistics	Thai
Nga Ruckdeschel	Sociology	Vietnamese
Darin Self	Government	Indonesian

Southeast Asia Program Thesis Write-up Fellowships, Summer 2017

Name	Discipline	Country of Interest	Named Award Received
Okki Kurniawan	Linguistics	Indonesia	James Siegel
Matthew Minarchek	History	Indonesia	Erik Thorbecke
Nicole Reisnour	Ethnomusicology	Indonesia	Martin Hatch

SEAP Research Fellowships and Einaudi Center Travel Grants, Summer 2017

Name	Discipline	Country of Interest	Named Award Received
Minqi Chai*	Government	Malaysia	
Juan Fernandez*	History	Netherlands	Audrey Kahin
Sampreety Gurung	Anthropology	Malaysia	
Oradi Inkhong*	Anthropology	Thailand	
Margaret Jack	Information Science	Cambodia	
Mary Kate Long*	Asian Studies	Myanmar	John Badgley
Sireemas Maspong*	Linguistics	Thailand	Nancy Loncto
Anissa Rahadiningtyas*	Art History	Indonesia	
Jaynel Santos*	City and Regional Planning	Philippines	Helen E. Swank
Darin Self*	Government	Vietnam	
Alex Thai-Vo*	History	Vietnam	Oek Giok Po
Youyi Zhang*	History	Cambodia	

**Received research travel funds from both SEAP and Einaudi*

LAURISTON SHARP PRIZE (2016)

We are pleased to award the 2016 Lauriston Sharp Prize for outstanding achievement to Edmund Joo Vin Oh, PhD in history, and Sean Fear, PhD in development sociology. Named in honor of the founder of the Southeast Asia Program, Lauriston Sharp (1907–93), the prize is awarded each year to recent PhDs who have contributed most outstandingly to both scholarship and the community life of the Southeast Asia Program.

Sean Fear's dissertation "Republican Saigon's Clash of Constituents: Domestic Politics and Civil Society in US-South Vietnamese Relations, 1967–1971" is a superb example of international history in terms of methodology and conception. His meticulously constructed correction of both traditional and revisionist analyses of the later phases of the end of the Vietnam War, and his focus on the need to understand the internal dynamics of Vietnamese politics during that period, come at a particularly appropriate time. The US media is currently revisiting the political dynamics of that period (for example, through a recent PBS series and also through discussions of Watergate), while the current "populist" administration draws us all back to that time because of its postures and actions. Fear helps us to contextualize a moment in history that is now eerily familiar, and does so in a remarkably accomplished way. His control of the main sources of the period—in English, French, and Vietnamese—adds substantial weight and support to his meticulous analysis and well-formed conclusions.

The accomplishments of Edmund Oh are equally impressive. His dissertation "Resource Governance and the Power of Depoliticized Development: The Rise of Fisheries Co-management in Vietnam" is exemplary engaged scholarship in the essential area of local and national politics as well as in the growing field of ecology/environmental studies. It is a landmark work in the sociological scholarship on Vietnam and on environmental studies in general. Moreover, Edmund was a stalwart contributor to the community life of the Southeast Asia Program in numerous capacities. He has not only been a tireless young scholar, but also his character toward others is admirably selfless, patient, and empathetic. Between his scholarship and his service, he is a deserving recipient of this award.

SEAN FEAR is a Lecturer in Modern International History at the University of Leeds. Sean's research focuses on South Vietnamese domestic politics and diplomacy during the Second Republic (1967-1975). He has conducted research at several archives in Vietnam and the United States, and draws heavily on Vietnamese-language official records and print media. His publications have appeared in Diplomatic History and the Journal of Vietnamese Studies, among others, and he is currently working on a book manuscript under contract with Harvard University Press. Sean has received funding and awards from Dartmouth College Dickey Center for International Understanding, the New York University Center for the United States and the Cold War, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, among others.

EDMUND OH currently holds a faculty position at the ELM Graduate School at HELP University, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where he teaches research methodology and dissertation writing to business students. For the past two years, he has also co-taught a course on governance and institutions in Asia designed for visiting students from the Australian National University. As part of this course he had the privilege of leading students on field trips to Ho Chi Minh City and the Mekong Delta. His university responsibilities aside, Edmund enjoys working with youth and contributing to leadership and environmental awareness programs at the school where his son is enrolled.

VISITING FELLOWS

RATCHADA ARPORNSILP is a Fulbright Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow with the International Program, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, for 2017–18. She earned her BA in political science from Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. She also received her MS in environmental governance from Albert Ludwigs University of Freiburg under the German Academic Exchange Service Scholarship and MA in Inter-Asia NGO studies from SungKongHoe University, South Korea. In Thailand, she worked with the Center for People and Forests, an international nongovernmental organization (NGO) based in Kasetsart University. She has over eight years of professional experience with international NGOs and public agencies working in regional program management across Asia and the Pacific region, including Oxfam Great Britain in Asia and the Asia Foundation. With a background in environmental politics, Ratchada applies her technical expertise to developing interdisciplinary approaches to integrating social inclusion and gender equity from the grassroots community level into national and international policy processes in the field of natural resource management, with a focus on forest landscape governance and sustainable development.

BAI CHUN is a professor of Thai language and literature at the School of Asian-African Studies, Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU). He has also taught at Chiang Mai Rajabhat University in Thailand. He obtained his MA in regional studies from Chiang Mai University and his PhD in linguistics (translation studies) from BFSU. His academic interests involve modern Thai literature and Thai translations of Mahayana sutras. His recent publications include "Modern Thai Literature: 1980–2000" and "Thai Translations of Lotus Sutra (Kumarajiva's Version): A Comparative Study." As a visiting fellow in the Southeast Asia Program at Cornell, his current research focuses on the ascetic-philosopher Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1906–1993) and Mahayana Buddhism, especially on Buddhadasa's interpretation of Zen thoughts. He hopes to write a biography of Buddhadasa on the basis of this research.

FAIZAH ZAKARIA is a postdoctoral research fellow in the History Program at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore and a recipient of that university's College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Singapore Teaching and Academic Research Talent Scheme international scholarship, which enabled her visit to Cornell. She obtained her PhD in history at Yale University in December 2017, specializing in modern Southeast Asia, late imperial and modern China, and global environmental history. Before that she earned an honors degree in mathematics and a master's degree in Southeast Asian studies from the National University of Singapore. While at Yale she served as graduate coordinator for the Yale Indonesian Forum and Yale Program in Agrarian Studies, organizing conferences and workshops largely around environmental themes. Her research focuses on landscape and religious conversions in the North Sumatran uplands, including migrations from these highlands to the urbanizing cities on the coast. She is broadly interested in the nexus between social and environmental history, probing dichotomies of humans and nature as well as the natural and the supernatural. These themes will be the part of the book manuscript that she will be developing during her visit to Cornell, tentatively titled "Spiritual Anthropocene: An Environmental History of Conversions in the Sumatran Uplands, 1800 to 1928." Her published work ranges from academic articles—the most recent being a Gramscian examination of traditional Malay medicine in the journal *Indonesia and the Malay World*—to fiction and poetry in Malay.

SEAP FACULTY 2017-2018

Warren B. Bailey, professor, finance, Johnson School of Management

Randolph Barker, professor emeritus, agricultural economics

Victoria Beard, associate professor, city and regional planning

Anne Blackburn, professsor, Asian studies and Buddhist studies

Thak Chaloemtiarana, professor, Asian literature, religion, and culture; and Asian studies

Abigail C. Cohn, professor, linguistics and director of the Southeast Asia Program

Magnus Fiskesjö, associate professor, anthropology (on leave Fall 2018)

Chiara Formichi, associate professor, Asian studies

Arnika Fuhrmann, assistant professor, Asian studies

Jenny Goldstein, assistant professor, development sociology

Greg Green, curator, Echols Collection on Southeast Asia

Martin F. Hatch, professor emeritus, music

Ngampit Jagacinski, senior lecturer, Thai, Asian studies

Yu Yu Khaing, lecturer, Burmese, Asian studies

Sarosh Kuruvilla, Andrew J. Nathanson Family professor, industrial and labor relations

Tamara Lynn Loos, professor, history

Kaja M. McGowan, associate professor, art history, archaeology

Andrew Mertha, professor, government

Christopher J. Miller, senior lecturer, music

Stanley J. O'Connor, professor emeritus, art history

Jolanda Pandin, senior lecturer, Indonesian, Asian studies

Thomas Pepinsky, associate professor, government (on leave Fall 2018)

Hannah Phan, senior lecturer, Khmer, Asian studies

Maria Theresa Savella, senior lecturer, Tagalog, Asian studies

James T. Siegel, professor emeritus, anthropology

Eric Tagliacozzo, professor, history

Keith W. Taylor, professor, Asian studies (on leave Spring 2018)

Erik Thorbecke, H. E. Babcock professor emeritus, economics and food economics

Thúy Tranviet, senior lecturer, Vietnamese, Asian studies

Marina Welker, associate professor, anthropology

John Whitman, professor, linguistics (on leave Spring and Fall 2018)

Andrew Willford, professor, anthropology

Lindy Williams, professor, development sociology

John U. Wolff, professor emeritus, linguistics and Asian studies

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Wimo Ambala Bayang
Indonesian
born 1976

***To Remove*, from the series *Kelud*, 2014**

Diptych: archival color prints on photographic paper, mounted to panels

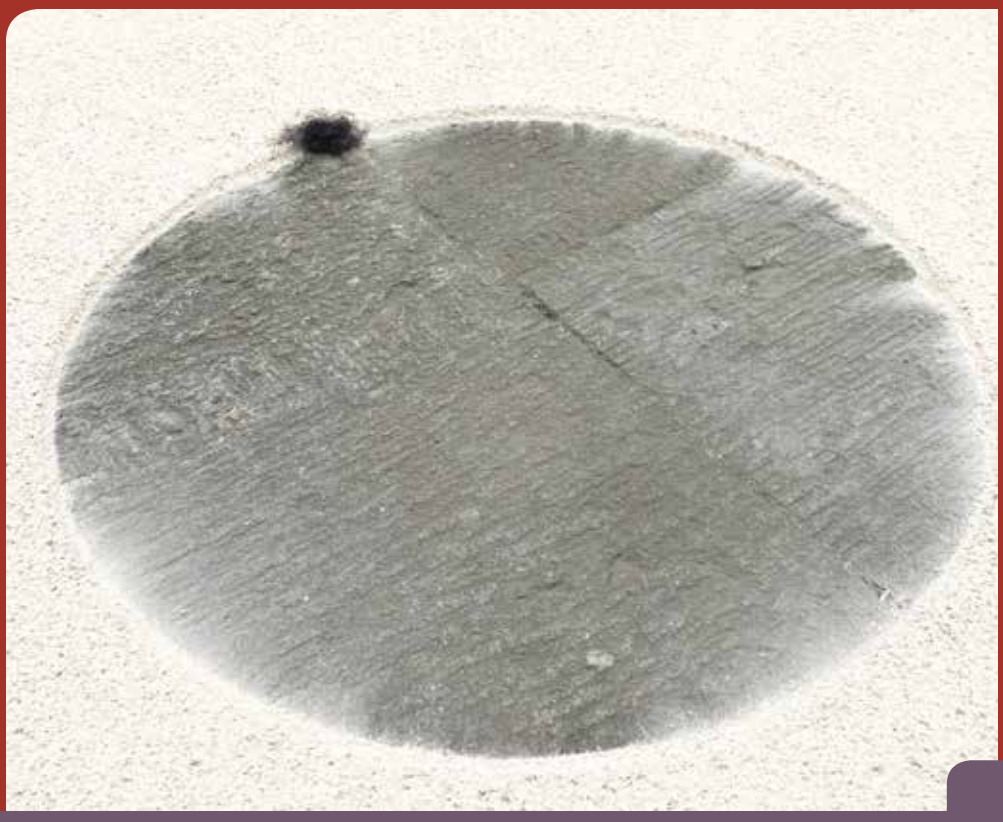
Edition 3/3

Each panel: 19 5/8 × 29 1/2 inches (49.8 × 74.9 cm)

Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art

Acquired through the George and Mary Rockwell Fund

JOHNSON MUSEUM OF ART RECENT ACQUISITION



Born in Magelang, Java, Wimo Ambala Bayang lives and works in Yogyakarta. A founding member of the photography collective Ruang Mes 56, images from his series *High Hopes* were included in the Johnson Museum's 2017 exhibition *Identity Crisis: Reflections on Public and Private Life in Contemporary Javanese Photography,* guest-curated by SEAP Visiting Fellow Brian Arnold. This pair of images reveals the beauty and menace of the thick layer of volcanic ash that fell on Yogyakarta and other areas of central and eastern Java from the eruption of Mount Kelud in February 2014.

SOUTHEAST ASIA PROGRAM

http://seap.einaudi.cornell.edu/

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